

## Charles Ryder letters 1900 - 01<sup>1</sup>

*Survey work done was under the command of Major T F B Renny-Tailyour RE. Place names and family names are in bold for ease of reference. As the input of much of this text was done with Dragon Dictate there may be words such as 'that' for 'but', 'of' for 'off', 'male' for 'mail' etc. that I have failed to correct.*

Lisle Ryder.

22<sup>nd</sup> July 1900, SS Tsing-tan, en route to Taku (from Shanghai), to Ida (in Bedford): “My own darling sweetheart, Now I must begin regular writing again and send you as long letters as ever I can, but my darling how I do long for news of you. I hope that when you heard we were coming to **Shanghai** you wrote to some of these places such as **Hong Kong**. If not it will be a month or more I begin to get regular letters from you. We couldn't get our things ready in time to get off by the steamer leaving on the 20<sup>th</sup>, so decided to go by this German steamer which was to leave later in the day. It did not however leave till yesterday morning. It was beastly hot all yesterday, regular Red Sea heat and no pukahs in the ship. Today it is a bit better. We reach the German settlement **Kiaochon** tonight and there I'm afraid we must wait 2 days as they have a lot of cargo to take on. The steamer is crowded, 28 people, all men no ladies, all Germans, however they mostly talk English. I think of you all day dearest. If I send any telegrams home I shall address them (to) **Ouslea** (?), as that is a shorter address than 5 Merton Road. I see Capt. Gwynne is up at **Tientsin**<sup>2</sup> with his regiment the Welsh Fusiliers. I really cannot tell how long this thing will last. The general idea is that the allied forces cannot advance from **Tientsin** before the beginning of September & it will take a fortnight to reach **Pekin**<sup>3</sup>, then when that is done nobody knows what will be done next. I have written to the Madras Bank, Bangalore to send you home £60 a month. Having to get a lot of new things will be rather expensive. When we got to **Chiating-fu**, where we first got into a boat, I weighed 12 stone 4 lbs, but I've gone up a good deal since then. **Shanghai** is a very bad place for buying things. We could get no uniforms & no camp kit of any sort. I'm sending round to India for the latter & for uniform & helmet I hope to get those made by one of (the) native regiments. The heat which is very bad, just as bad as India, lasts to the end of August, then the autumn is very pleasant & the winter as cold as possible 30° or more of frost, and we shall be wearing furs.

“24<sup>th</sup> My dear. As I've often told you, you mustn't expect much of a letter from (on) board ships. I think I'm getting a worse sailor as I grow older, not that I was sick, but I felt bad although the ship rolled very little. Yesterday we reached this place **Tsin-tan**, the port of the German possession. We went ashore for a walk in the evening & that made me feel much better. Today I've been writing as hard as I can, but must give you a turn now. My darling pet, I'm so afraid you will be disappointed at getting so short a letter as my last, but sweetheart, you know how I take every opportunity I can of writing to you. It really was a great deprivation not being able to have my little daily talk with you; dearest, it is such ages since I've seen your dear handwriting and how long it will be before we meet I really can't say. Of course it is quite possible that the Chinese may collapse after a good beating or two. Capt. Brooking is D.A.A.G. Of one of the brigades from India. I shall probably be with Gen. Gaselee, so unless you hear to the contrary; if you see the telegrams that he has gone somewhere I shall probably be there too. You ought to buy yourself a good map of China, Bretschneider's is the best, and then you will understand all about it. It is very dull waiting here, but the Captain says we shall start tomorrow all right. I had my hair (cut) by a Japanese barber in Shanghai. I wish I knew if you were all right about money. Do you see about our poor Welsbach<sup>4</sup>, the £200 is worth £80 now. Thank you my dear, no more speculating for me, good old 3 per cents in future. I don't know one bit how we stand in the money line; either you with Cox or I out here & in India. I think on service I get my pay 1140/- and

<sup>1</sup> These letters follow straight on from those from Yunnan as he sent off to help relieve the legations in Peking after the Boxer Rebellion. His extended time away from the family takes its toll, which is increasing apparent later in the sequence of letters.

<sup>2</sup> Now Tianjin.

<sup>3</sup> Now Beijing.

<sup>4</sup> Austrian inventor and developer of gas mantles.

100/- a month extra; no travelling allowance, but then I get Govt transport; but my expenses will be very heavy once I've got the things I want. The flies here are a great nuisance. It is such a pity I couldn't have met all my mail at Shanghai & had it on board, how I should have enjoyed it.

“25<sup>th</sup> I'm afraid we shan't get off today. They are still loading & unloading cargo & doing it jolly slowly. It is rather slow work waiting here, when we may be missing all sorts of fighting at **Tientsin**. I've taken some medicine toady which I hope will open me a bit & make me feel less bilious. It would have been more comfortable in the hotel on shore in some ways. You darling, I meant to have sent home some silver things for your dressing table, but you must wai now. I may pick up something interesting in **Pekin**, in the meantime don't forget me. I wonder whether you ever long to be in my arms again, because I certainly long to have you there, and when you do I shall make you a present for you only to keep 9 months & then return to me! Seriously it will be quite time to have another when we meet.

“26 July. We got off at last this morning, very tired of waiting 3 whole days. Now my love the ship is getting rather lobbery (?), so I had better finis this off while I can. We reach **Chefoo** tomorrow at day break and I will leave these letters with the Consul to be sent down to **Shanghai**. This boat will certainly stop 24 hours there, so we shall try & get another boat on. All messages by telegraph have to be sent by steamer from **Taku** to **Chefoo** so there are daily despatch boats going. I do long for your letters, darling, and mind you you write me dear sweet ones & tell me all about the children & all your troubles about servants, although I can't help you. Now darling I must shut up or I shall be sick. My fondest love & heaps of kisses, sweetheart & kiss my 3 dear chicks for me. For ever Your very devoted lover and husband, Charlie.

“I suppose you are quite the old maid again.”

24<sup>th</sup> July, **Tsin-tan**, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, Here we are at the German colony; cannot leave till tomorrow as something has gone wrong with our engines & they have to be repaired. In the afternoon we went ashore & explored the place. The Germans have certainly been very energetic building fine big house(s) and making good roads, piers &c. The trade of the place is however nil & the harbour not a good one with a south wind blowing. It is annoying stopping here when we want to get on & now it will be the 28<sup>th</sup> before we get to **Taku**. Most of our fellow passengers have landed here. 14 of them were German Roman Catholic missionaries who had had to come away from their stations in the interior. At present (the) trouble there is only beginning but unless the missionaries & other Europeans up the **Yangtse** leave very soon it is quite possible that a sort of Indian mutiny on a small scale may occur again. You really will in England know much more of what is going on than I do. There were reports amongst the Germans that the legations were still standing on the 18<sup>th</sup>. We left **Tsin-tan** this morning, very tired of waiting there & wasting 3 days. However we reach **Chefoo** tomorrow at day break & I shall leave these letters there. If we find some other steamer going off at once we shall change into her as this boat will certainly stop 24 hours. There is a little roll on, just enough to give me a headache. I don't suppose there are regular arrangements yet about a post office into the force, but things will settle down soon. My first thing will be to get khaki uniform made by same regimental dirzi. It will be very interesting seeing the troops of so many nations together, but operations will be very slow as transport &c will be so much more difficult to arrange, each country doing its own, than if it were for one army. In **Shanghai** the price of transport ponies had gone up enormously, the different powers sending agents who bid against each other. I hope in my next letter to be able to tell you more news. I can't write more, it's getting too rough! Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“I don't know whether Wiffs (*his brother **Wilfred***) is in the Transvaal or where he is! My dearest mother your birthday will have passed before this reaches you, but many many happy returns of the day!”

30<sup>th</sup> July, **Tientsin**, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, How ever to find time to write to you, I don't know. I got to Chefoo on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There our German steamer was stopping for 2 days, but luckily we found a steamer going up with telegrams, **Chefoo** being the end of the Telegraph line at present. So we got onto her, and got to the fleet next moving, then we had to get into a tug and go nine miles to the

mouth of the river, i.e. **Taku**, where all the (?)ts are. There was a naval Lieutenant with us, who told us all about the capture. Our tug took us on up to **Tang-ku**, where we caught the train & got up here about 6.30 in the evening, leaving our kit. Manifold, I & Capt Mockler (?), the son of Mrs M. at **Eastbourne** wandered off through the European settlement, which in most places was a mass of ruins from the bombardment by the Chinese & at last found Gen. Gaselee's quarters, reported ourselves & he asked us to dinner. Then we found quarters in an empty house & got our luggage up from the station by midnight. I have been attached to the intelligence until the regular survey arrives. Renny-Tailyour is coming. It is rather hard lines on me as he will be senior to me. There is I believe to be a move forward on **Pekin**, which is 80 miles off on Aug.1 & there will be plenty of fighting as the Chinese are in force 6 miles or so from here. The Japanese had a reconnaissance today & had about 30 casualties. I met Capt. Gwynne here. He asked me whether you wanted to keep the house on darling, but I said I couldn't say anything, that I left it to you. However he said he saw you in March which is later news that (*sic*) I have. You must run your own show my pet, as I know nothing. Dearest how I do love you. God bless you darling. Fondest love & heaps of kisses. Kiss the chicks for me. For ever Your very devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

“My letters must be short. I can only scribble a line now & again, but you will get plenty of news in the papers.”

30<sup>th</sup> July, Tientsin, to Julia: “My dearest mother, I wrote you a letter up to **Chefoo**, but it will be posted with this. I was lucky to get the mail packet that afternoon up to **Taku** or rather 9 miles on t??de the mouth of the river. We then got into a tug, that was the 28<sup>th</sup>, & went up to **Tang-ku**, a little above **Taku**. It was very interesting seeing the forts which we had bombarded or captured. One of the men who wasn't in it was with us & explained the whole thing. Then at **Tang-ku** we got a train & got up to **Tientsin** about 6.30, left our luggage at the station and wandered about to find where the English troops are. The whole place, i.e. the European settlement, was in parts a mass of ruins, shell marks all over the place. We finally found gen. Gaselee's headquarters, reported ourselves & he asked us to dinner. Then we found quarters in an empty house & got our luggage up to that, took us till 12 o'clock. I have been attached to the Intelligence for the present, until the regular survey party arrive and spent my time drawing maps & hunting for kit. I've got most I wanted. There is believed to be a move forward in a couple of days, news having at length reached here that the embassies were still safe. The Chinese are in force about 6 or 7 miles off, so that our first fight will come off on Aug. 1. it is very interesting going about here & seeing the place and having the accounts of the defence, also seeing all the different nationalities. Everyone agrees that the Japanese are the best equipped & no one surpasses them in bravery. They were out (on) reconnaissance today & had 30 casualties. I think there will be some very heavy fighting, but after the first fight our advance will be made as quickly as possible to try & save the people in **Pekin**. I will write as often as I can, but I doubt having much time in the next fortnight. Correspondents for the newspapers are crowding in now, so you will probably know as much about what is going on as we do if not more. Much love to you all. Ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

2<sup>nd</sup> August, Tientsin, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I must get started with the new letter as we are still here. I was delighted to get your telegram of “well”. It had been forwarded from **Shanghai** & then kept here & I only casually heard about its being here. There is no regular day for English mail but letters go down to the fleet every day & then sent on by any ship that happens to be going on (*sic*) **Shanghai**. There was a meeting of generals yesterday & another tomorrow. In the meantime we have stored all our spare kit & are ready to start at an hour's notice. What we shall probably do is march out 5 miles or so one evening bivouac & then attack the Chinese next morning so as to have the whole day before us. I've been rather disturbed by “trots” owing to the bad water, nearly everyone is the same. I haven't been able to get any kind of pony to ride, but I have a saddle, and trust to looting a pony after our first victory. I hope to get you some nice things out of **Pekin**, buying them off men who've looted as there will doubtless be lots of looting, silver, silks & furs. These will of course have nothing to do with you, but will be mine. Don't expect me to get anything out of this campaign in the way of brevets.

You see at present I am only attached to the Intelligence to look after maps & then when Renny-Tailyour comes he will be senior to me. I was shewn one place today where a shell struck a house just at the very moment when a lady next door was increasing the population. I have discovered a reading room in the Town Hall here, so I hope to see some papers this evening. It has been cloudy all today. I hope it won't rain as the country all gets under water in heavy rain and then moving troops is almost an impossibility. I hope you'll love me a little bit extra when I get the medal.

“Aug. 3. I think there is going to be a move soon. All our spare baggage has been stored away in a big godown<sup>5</sup> and things for the boats are to go on shortly leaving me with one roll of bedding. I do hope we shall be off soon. I'm feeling very fit now. Some lobster & an ice I had for dinner last night seems to have done me good. I'm so happy with your telegram to say you are well, but I long for letters direct from you. It is a fine day so I hope we shall start & get a dry night for our bivouac. My darling, in all the bustle of getting ready I don't ever stop thinking of you. I wonder whether you intend stopping on at **Bedford**, after the year's tenancy is up. If you are leaving I hope you are given the correct notice & write out & let me know your address &c. God bless you sweetheart, I adore you.

“Aug. 4. we are off now; start at 2.30, go out about 5 miles, bivouac & attack tomorrow morning. Russians, Germans & French one side of the river, English, Japs & American's the other. I fancy that the other side will be the most hotly contested, but we have to look out for a flank attack as we go along. The country is very flat with high crops so it will be rather difficult to see. You've probably seen maps in the papers. **Pai-tsang** is where the fight will take place. Today go out at the head of the column. Tomorrow having to survey I shall be more behind, quite safe, old girlie, so don't you be in a funk. My fondest love, darling. Kiss 3 little girlies for me. For ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

4<sup>th</sup> August, **Tientsin**, to Julia: “My dearest mother, The orders are just out for an advance at 2.30 this afternoon. March out about 5 miles & attack the Chinese early tomorrow morning. The naval guns are out already & will do some bombarding this afternoon. We go out about 3,000 strong, Americans 1,500, Japanese 10,000, these three on one side of the river **Pei-ho** and the Russians, Germans & French in all about 5,000 on the other. They will be opposite the main position but I fancy we are making a big flank movement. We have to take a day's rations with us & I'm putting another day with my bedding as we shall probably push the Chinese back all day & get far ahead of our boats, on which the bulk of the kit is stowed. No fires are allowed tonight, so we shall have cold dinner & chota hazri<sup>6</sup>. I haven't been very well the last few days, the water is awfully bad. It has got very hot the last day or so & cloudy, so we shall probably have rain which will make things rather difficult for us. The force here now consists of the Welsh Fusiliers, 1<sup>st</sup> B I, 7<sup>th</sup> B I, 24<sup>th</sup> P, 1<sup>st</sup> Sikhs & ½ 1<sup>st</sup> Madras Pioneers, 1 battery Field Artillery, 450 naval brigade with guns. About 1,500 stay here to guard the place. We don't know anything about what is going on in other parts of China. The general opinion is that we shall have very heavy fighting between here & **Pekin**, but a decisive defeat may make the Chinese collapse altogether. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

7<sup>th</sup> August, **Yangt Sim**, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, We've had two fights so far and have got 20 miles out of the 80 to **Pekin**. We left **Tientsin** on the afternoon of the 4<sup>th</sup> marching out 4½ miles through the native city, and bivouaced in some fields. I slept very comfortably till 10 o'clock when it began to rain and as we were to start at 2, I got up & had some biscuits & cold tea, then off we started in the dark. The Japanese had been starting some time before, getting well out to the left flank, and they soon surprised a battery & rushed it. When we were pratin (?) along a big bund we had to wait for an hour so I lay down & had a sleep. Then at day light we moved further along the bund & lay down under the bund & soon got under fire. Several shells passed overhead but didn't burst; then a horse was killed about 10 yards off. One shell came straight over me, but didn't hit anyone. We waited some time to allow the Japanese to get well forward, but they turned in towards the river and attacked the main

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5 In India and East Asia, a warehouse, especially one at a dockside.

6 Hindi: a light meal eaten very early in the morning.

Chinese position while we were still. Then an advance was ordered & our regiments extended & went through the fields. As soon as I got down off the bund I could see the nothing, the country quite flat & crops often 6 or 7 feet high. The General galloped & I was soon left by myself being on foot. Presently I came up behind a ~~Chinese~~ Japanese battery in action & sat down behind them. The Chinese were making a feeble reply. All their shells fell 2 or 300 yards behind us. I had passed a lot of Japanese killed & wounded near one village. The Japanese finally captured the main village **Pei-tsang**, the Chinese crossing the river & bolting. We bivouaced just outside the village.

“Aug. 6, we made a later start & as I had now surveying to do, I had to go slowly & so dropped behind & missed the fight that took this place; at least I had a fair view of it; came on lots of killed & wounded. We are halting today, camped in fields. My “trots” continue bad, so I'm dosing & dieting myself. It is most unlucky, as I haven't yet raised a pony. It is pretty hot & very thirsty weather. We are just alongside the river and our junks came up last night, and we were able to get hold of some things. Our rations are 1 lb of tinned beef, 1 loaf of bread, 2 oz jam, some sugar & tea, vegetables we loot & one day we got a chicken. Our mess consists of 6, all connected with the headquarters, Capt. Norrie DAGMS for Intelligence, Wingate & myself, attached to Intelligence, Low (?) Provost (?) Mardale, Rigby Signalling Officer, Liut. Kemp RN, Russian interpreter. No chance of sending letters for some time.

“Aug. 8, we had a short march to **Tsai-tsun** & Aug. 9, 11 miles to **Ho-shih-wu** & that was very long & tiring. Heat very bad, 300 men English & Americans fell out & several of the latter died. I have looted a pony so I'm all right now. Today, Aug. 10, we are making a late start, 3.30 & shall not get in till near mid-night. We shall then be only 20 miles from **Pekin** in a straight line. I don't think there will be much more fighting. This place has earthworks all round it, but the Chinese bolted. The cavalry had a small fight 3 miles west of here, killing 40 Chinese. I'm getting quite used to seeing dead men & horses, although it was nasty at first. It is really very hot here & we shall all be glad to get to **Pekin**. The nights are cool though, I'm very fit now, stopped the trots & am now the other way on. Nobody can say how long we shall be up in Peking. I had a good bathe yesterday in the river which is very hot. We are encamped in fields, not an ounce of shade, except what we've made with matting and waterproof sheets. Although the heat is bad we have really been very lucky; if it had rained the army couldn't have moved, as the whole country becomes a swamp.

“Aug. 13, We are halted at **Tung-chou** 13 miles from **Pekin** but advance tomorrow. Had no particular adventures on the 10<sup>th</sup>. We did a night march, not getting in till 10 o'clock & the next night till 11. Imagine my delight on the 11<sup>th</sup> at getting a bundle of letters, yours from April 19 to May 30. The lot from Jan 12 to April 12 have not come yet but still it was such happiness to me to get your dear sweet letters, so loving. I had an hour before starting to read them & they travel in my haversack & are enjoyed at odd moments. I am so vexed about the money, darling. I can't think what has happened, as I gave such careful instructions to the officer in charge 21 Party & to the Bank of Madras. You mention that **Uncle William**<sup>7</sup> left you a legacy, but you don't say how much, that was evidently in the letters I haven't got. I am going to send this off as our junks go down river again to bring up more stores.

“It really is very hot here. I am sitting in trousers & vest & sweating hard, but I'm very well. Your letters give me so much to think about my pet. I'm so glad you've taken up sketching again, darling, please keep it up. You really do it so well, it will be such a pity to drop it (*no sketches are believed to have survived in the family*). I'm so glad our three chicks are well (**Margaret, Enid & Violet**), give them each a kiss & tell them father will come home as soon as done fighting the Chinese, I have very little time, darling, just had to stop to trace a map, and it is so difficult to do when one is sweating. I haven't really had time yet to realise that I've got your letters again. I'm afraid you must have been very anxious, dearest, when you knew I was coming through China. I expect you thought I had got to **Pekin** and was massacred &c.

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<sup>7</sup> **William Chapman Grigg**, 1839 - 12<sup>th</sup> March 1900, A distinguished doctor who was a founder member and President of the British Gynaecological Society. There is an obituary in the British Medical Journal 7th April 1900 which indicates how he sacrificed his life for his patients at Wynberg Hospital.

Everyone who knows the country says it gets cooler after this month, but we are all grumbling at the heat. I hope you will do whatever you like about staying in **Bedford** or not. I cannot tell you anything about my coming home or you're coming out. It all depends how long I have to stay at **Pekin**. Your loving letters have made me so happy. You are a dear & I love you more than ever. God bless you, darling, heaps & heaps of love & kisses, for ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

12<sup>th</sup> August, **Tung-chou**, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, Here we are with only 13 miles or so between us & **Pekin** & I don't fancy we shall have any more fighting. We left **Tientsin** on the afternoon of the 4<sup>th</sup>, marched out 5 miles & camped in the fields for the night, no tents so we slept in the open till about 1 o'clock, when we had to sit in the rain for an hour or so before starting. The Japanese had been passing out behind us most of the night, out on our left flank with the Americans & we started along a high embankment as soon as they were clear, kept on this for a mile or so & then lay down for an hour till we heard heavy firing away on the left. This was the Japanese capturing a village. It being then just dawn, we moved along under cover of the embankment for another mile, and lay down. The shells mostly dropping behind us & hardly one bursting. There were about ½ a dozen casualties near me. One shell whizzed just over the head of a man lying in front who gave such a jump & kick that he knocked my helmet off. I was with Gen Gaselee & as soon as the advance was ordered we stayed up on the embankment but hadn't much view owing to the height of the crops. When Gen Gaselee I lost him as I was on foot, so finding a Japanese battery in action I sat down behind them, waiting for my surveyor to come up. Again all the Chinese shells came right over ahead. After about an hour or so of this there was a general advance & the Chinese bolted. The British casualties were only about 30 all told, but the Japanese lost 40 killed & 250 wounded. The Russians & French had moved up the left bank of the river but hadn't much fighting. We crossed at **Pei-tsang** & bivouaced beyond the village.

“On the 6<sup>th</sup> we had a fight but I lost it by being behind looking after the survey. It was much like the first day only we had the brunt of it, but only had 50 casualties. The Americans lost more, owing to their not advancing in extended order. I had a view of the fight from about 2 miles behind & then came up through all the wounded. This gave us **Yang-tsun** where the railway crosses the **Pei-ho**.

“From the 7<sup>th</sup>, when we halted up to here the Japanese have had the little fighting there has been. On the 8<sup>th</sup> we marched to **Tsai-tsun** & 9<sup>th</sup> to **Ho-hsi-wu**, being on the river each night to communicate with the river column. The 9<sup>th</sup> was a very hot day, hundreds of men falling out from exhaustion, so we did a night march on the 10<sup>th</sup> starting at 4 pm & getting in a 1 am very sleepy & tired, slept well for a bit; then rain came on the 11<sup>th</sup>. We did another evening march, & today we had about 5 miles here. Now we turn westwards for **Pekin** & I fancy will be there on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

“Yesterday to my great delight I had a budget of letters. My last letter from you was Jan 12, this lot began on April 19 & ended June 9. I cannot tell you how delighted I was & how I enjoyed them. Many thanks to you, **Una & Mary** (*his sisters*) for them. It has been & is very hot; but I have a pony, captured from the Chinese so I get along very uncomfortably. We are on very light kit & ordinary rations. I don't know when you will get this, as I can find no means of getting letters down, but things will get more regular when we are in **Pekin**. We get no news from the outside world. The Chinese have shown little fight. A little artillery preparation & then a steady advance & they bolt as hard as they can, chucking away everything they carry. Today is the first day we have had a house. We have been very lucky in our weather, hardly any rain, when in ordinary years the whole country is a swamp & quite impassable.

“Much love, mother dear, ever your loving son Charles Ryder.”

15<sup>th</sup> August, **Pekin**, to Ida: “My dearest, All well, got here yesterday. Relieved legations<sup>8</sup>. Very little loss. We were the first in. Fondest love, my darling. No time, post suddenly going off. Let mother know. Ever your own Charlie.”

16<sup>th</sup> August, **Pekin**, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Yesterday I suddenly heard of a convoy going down but only had time to scribble you a line, just to let you know I was all right. Now I can tell you about the taking of **Peking**. We left **Tung-chou** at 3.30 am on the 14<sup>th</sup> & soon heard heavy firing ahead. The day before the 7<sup>th</sup> B I<sup>9</sup>, 2 squadrons 1<sup>st</sup> B L<sup>10</sup> & 2 guns had gone out 9 miles towards **Pekin** & bivouaced. We kept with the main column for about 3 miles & then hurried on with the General to what was up. However we found the 7<sup>th</sup> B I all right. The firing was more to the north opposite the Japs & Russians. We awaited the arrival of our main body & advanced to about 1,200 yards of the outside wall, without seeing a Chinaman anywhere. We thought it was some trap, so the battery fired about 20 shots, but getting no answer we advanced & found the gate of the outer city open. This was a great point gained.

“This outer town is very thinly (*populated*) with many fields. We advanced for about 3 miles along a broad road & then halted to rest, then down a narrow lane till we came onto open ground under the big wall of the Tartar city. Here we came under fire so stuck amongst the houses & went to a sluice gate under the wall held by our garrison. There were a few of our sentries on the wall & we were cheering like mad. The relieving force now became a rabble, everybody rushing on up into the British Legation. All the people lined the road & cheered us & we shouted back. It was really a wonderful sight, many women in tears & everyone coming out with drinks, tea, water & whisky. Only about 200 men came in with us & I was about 6<sup>th</sup> in. The Chinese did not know we had got in as they kept up a constant rifle fire on the place but all the bullets went overhead. Then I was directed to take 6 men & man loopholes in one place & then climb a roof & there were Chinese blazing away about 100 yards off.

“About 5 o'clock the Americans arrived & an hour later the Russians; everyone hugely delighted that the Russians were scored off, because they had played a very low game. When we were at **Tung-chou** all the Generals wanted to advance but the Russian said his men must have a day's rest, so we halted a day. Then while we were halted he quietly sent on the bulk of his force & seized the middle east gate of the outer city at 2 am on the 14<sup>th</sup> and then couldn't advance any further. So he went back & asked the Japanese General for help, but the latter said what about the English, because the agreement was to line up on the 14<sup>th</sup> where the 7<sup>th</sup> B I had camped. The Russian said “Oh! Never mind the English.” So on they went again, but they could not make any progress & finally had to enter by our gate.

“Yesterday we didn't do much. I went onto the wall where (*sic*) we hold to see the town a bit. One bullet into the wall 3 ft from my head, but the Chinese had retired a lot. The Americans took the (*sic*) onto part of the Imperial Palace, but we didn't do anything & today so far no orders. The garrison here had provisions for 15 days more, but not much ammunition and the Chinese had got much bolder the last week. In one place they were only 15 yards off. For the last 2 weeks the only meat ration was ½ lb of horse or mule, but they had a lot of luxuries, like sardines & asparagus. Not a single woman or child was hit, but 6 children died, and 62 men were killed & 137 wounded out of 500 men. Now I must stop

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8 The march from Tianjin to Beijing of about 120 km included about 20,000 allied troops. On 4 August, there were approximately 70,000 Imperial troops and anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 Boxers along the way. The allies only encountered minor resistance, fighting battles at Beicang and Yangcun. At Yangcun, the 14th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. and British troops led the assault. The weather was a major obstacle. Conditions were extremely humid with temperatures sometimes reaching 42°C (108°F). These high temperatures and insects plagued the Allies. Soldiers dehydrated, and horses died. Chinese villagers killed Allied troops who searched for wells. The heat killed Allied soldiers, who foamed at the mouth. The tactics along the way were gruesome on either side. Allied soldiers beheaded already dead Chinese corpses, bayoneted or beheaded live Chinese, and raped Chinese girls and women. Cossacks were reported to have killed Chinese civilians almost automatically and Japanese kicked a Chinese soldier to death. The international force reached and occupied Beijing on 14 August. The British won the race among the international forces to be the first to liberate the besieged Legation Quarter. (Wikipedia)

9 Bengal Infantry.

10 Bengal Lancers.

to see after my pay.

“Aug. 21. I've been busy in a sort of buzzing about way. Nothing much going on. There are boxers down south & our reconnoitring parties have come into contact with a few now & again. I hope soon to move into better quarters. No one has had a bath since we've been here. A mail comes in with convoys now & again but none for me, but I hope soon you will be addressing your letters here & then I shall be happier. It is dreadful being so far away, my darling. I don't know at all how long we shall be here of course. I'm down for the **Chatham** course still next April, and of course if we stay on here till near then it is not much use your coming out. I wonder whether you're staying on a t **Bedford**. How nice for Father<sup>11</sup> having about £1,000 a year extra. He will be able to have a good time now. I wonder where they'll live. It is most uncomfortable writing as I'm in a passage with everyone passing by & the General about five yards off. Don't imagine for one moment I shall get mentioned in despatches or anything like that. I've had so little to do, the country quite level, no chance of surveying, but still I shall have the medal, old girlie. Fondest love, & heaps of kisses, for ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

17<sup>th</sup> August, Pekin, to Julia: “My dearest mother, Here we are in **Pekin** & I must write up my letter from **Tungchou** as there is no regular arrangement about letters yet & one only suddenly hears of some convoy going down or someone who will take letters.

“We halted the 13<sup>th</sup> owing to the representations of the Russian General that his men were too fatigued to march, but a strong reconnoissance was sent to bivouac 9 miles out, one portion of it being the 7<sup>th</sup> B I, 2 squadrons 1<sup>st</sup> B L & 2 guns. We left at 3.30 am and heard very heavy firing ahead, so after keeping with the column for 3 miles Gen. Gaselee pushed on to see what was up and we reached the 7<sup>th</sup> B I about 7.30, found them all right. They had been fired on most of the night but didn't lose a man, but the nearest fire was on our right opposite the Japanese. Then a message came in from the cavalry two miles ahead that they had been stopped by 600 Chinese in a timber yard, so the 7<sup>th</sup> B I moved out in support, & the main body halted an hour for rest. Then we went on, found no Chinese. Presently there was a halt & the infantry extended on each side of the river. You must remember that all this takes place in crops 10 feet high. There were Chinese about undoubtedly because one of my surveyors ¼ mile behind was fired on by or so, but they were all scattered & doing their best to escape. We soon came on to a long straight stretch of road & could see the outer wall. The artillery fired a few rounds at the gate, but no answer, so we advanced again, but everybody expecting a sudden hail of shot from the walls. However nothing came. The gate was only closed. We pushed it open & walked in. This was only the outer wall & lead us into the Chinese city. We had still 3 miles or so (*to go*) through one long street, but not continuous houses, then turned off down a narrow lane, a company of 1<sup>st</sup> Sikhs leading followed by the General. We then after 400 yards got out into some open ground underneath the wall 40 ft high or so, of the inner or **Tartar City**, came under fire a bit there, but we saw the British flag flying ¼ mile further down on the wall. Everyone cheered then but the fire was fairly heavy on the open, so we kept under cover of the houses till we got to a sluice gate under the wall about 10 ft high with a foot or so mud & water & got through that, breaking the gates & rushed in amongst a few ruined houses into the British Legation. I was next behind Gen. Gaselee who was with Sir Claud MacDonald who shook everyone by the hand & then we passed up across the lawn to the main building through a double line of the garrison, all offering us water or tea, everyone cheering, women crying with joy. It was really a sight. I can never forget, all this time the Chinese were firing heavily but all the bullets were going clean overhead. I had to post 6 men in one sandbag fort, one of whom was hit at once. Then I had to crawl up onto a roof behind sandbags to report on what could be seen. The Chinese were only 100 yards off, firing for all they were worth, but I'm quite certain they were not aiming, as not a shot came near me. When I'd seen all I could I came down & had some tea, & then everyone crowded round for news. What struck me as most curious was how indifferent all the ladies & children had got to the firing. The total loss was 62 killed & 137 wounded amongst all nationalities. No

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11 Her father was Edward Evans Grigg.

women or children were hit, but 6 children died from want of proper food. Tinned milk was very scarce & the meat ration had been horse or mule & only ½ a ration. It all gives one an idea of what **Lucknow** must have been. What saved the place was that the Chinese would not rush any barricade, which they could easily have done by force of numbers. About 5 pm the Americans turned up & an hour later the Russians. We are all highly delighted at getting in first as the Russian General tried to play us a trick by, after saying his men were too exhausted to march & making us halt at **Tungchou** he quietly marched on & got to the city the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> but then couldn't get on, had to ask the Japs for help. And when the Jap Gen. said "but what about the English, we have agreed to halt", he said "Oh! Never mind the English." The American General Chaffey was wild with the Russian General. I heard him using very strong language expressing his opinion of the trick. Since the day we got (in) things have been gradually organised. A convoy with the women & children goes down on Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I must tell you more about **Pekin** in my next. Our loss, British, was 5 wounded. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Rydet."

28<sup>th</sup> August, Pekin, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, We moved into a house a few days ago, one of the legation houses & have been making ourselves comfortable. Wingate & I went out one morning & looted a lot of odds & ends for the mess, like cups &c. I'm running the mess but we don't get much variety of food as we have not been able to get eggs yet. Yesterday I got a letter from mother of July 5. Poor dear old mother, evidently very anxious. She had written to 4 different places on the chance of my getting one letter. She says you were all well, so bit by bit I get my news, but I reckon it will be another fortnight before I get your letters regularly written to here. Today was the formal march through the Imperial Palace. Wingate & I went up as spectators onto the wall and saw the troops march in, 3 to 5,000 of each nation. Then we followed them in & wandered about. All imperial palaces have yellow glazed tiles on the roof. There wasn't much to see, but some beautiful jade, bronzes & China, that I should have liked to have had, but we, the British, are not allowed to loot. There have been organised parties sent out to loot and a sale takes place every evening. The prices however are very high so I haven't bought much yet.

"You darling, it does seem such an age since I had a kiss, but I'm always thinking of you & longing to be with you. Complimentary telegrams are coming in. One from the Queen yesterday. I believe Prince Ching, one of the principal Chinese Ministers is coming in to treat (*sic*). I only hope we shan't have to stop here very long, but everyone is making preparations for winter. I'll tell you what you could do, darling, that is send me out some warm underclothing. I have some, but I should like:

- 2 very thick vests
- 2 very thick pyjamas
- 2 pairs thick drawers
- 1 pair thick long bed stockings
- 1 pair thick knitted gloves.

"Would you get these & send them out to me unless you see from the papers that we are not stopping at **Peking**. I have had a good deal of work to do & I can s?r that in a few days unless we move out anywhere that I shall have nothing to do. So you may get fairly long letters. I wonder where you will be when you get this. I think after our long separation you will have to give me another baby, don't you? I shall love you so much. I shall refuse you nothing you ask! Curiously enough I'm in Base (?) **Ironside's** house; he is a cousin you know, but left in March. I have applied for a Chinese teacher, which will give me something to do. I hope soon to get some official letters from India & to hear how I stand about pay &c. I do hope you are all right about money. It is a beastly nuisance the Survey & Bank between them muddling things. Our mess is getting smaller now, as Kemp RN leaves on Thursday to go back with the naval brigade. We shall then be only 4, Norie (*sic*), Wingate, Rigby & myself. Brooking turned up the other day. He said his wife had gone home, Jane gone back to Bangalore. Everybody's health is very good – the place is gradually being cleaned up; every now & then one meets a whiff of dead Chinese. A pipe would be a welcome present, two cheap ones better than one expensive one! I shall be glad to get into real civilization again with plenty of clothes. You see this has come on the top of all my

travelling & I'm getting a bit weary. I long to sit down to a nice cosy little breakfast with you. Now you look forward to coming up to **London** when I come home & meeting me at the Windsor Hotel, with a late breakfast next morning! You will of course see much later news in the newspapers, but I can see that I cannot get back to India soon enough for you to come out. If I am still down for the **Chatham** course, for that I must be home end of March. The question is, shall I get away from here in time for that. If I'm late for that, then you come out & join me in India, see.

“Aug. 30. It has been raining the last two days so the convoy which was going down has been put off. In the mean time I've been having a good go of trots yesterday, very sick. Better now. Renny-Tailyour reached **Tientsin** on the 25<sup>th</sup> so I suppose he will be up here in another 10 days or so. Time is going rather slowly just now. I'm longing for news of you again, darling. I should like a good budget of letters. D. U. these separations, but still you will be glad for me to have a medal, won't you. All the roads are awfully muddy. We hear no news either from outside or what is going on here in the way of treating (*sic*) with the Chinese Govt. I'm feeling rather slack after my “recent illness” & not inclined for writing, but I adore you & long to see your dear pretty face again.

“Aug.31. Can't get rid of my little complaint which is becoming very prevalent, this makes me rather slack, as I've had bad nights the last two days. Yesterday a mail came in of sorts. No letters for me, but some old papers, Standards & Graphics of April & May forwarded on from **Sadiya** (Assam, India). I think in about a fortnight I shall begin to get regular letters from you. I sat reading my Standards this morning, made me think of you, my darling. How I should love for you to sit by my side or on my knee & have a good long talk, nothing more!

“Sept.1. This goes off today. I'm distinctly better thank you. It has turned much colder thanks to the rain, but today is bright & sunny. I dreamt of you last night but forgotten it. I've looted a big spring mattress without a bed & am very comfortable; only want you to cuddle. I expect we shall get 3 months special leave when this is over. Perhaps I might come home & fetch you or if I go home for the **Chatham** course we tack it on again to that & come out together with No. 4. What a pity we weren't together when all the excitement over the **Transvaal** was on. Then you would probably have had a boy. Heaps of kisses you darling. You tell Lord Salisbury (*Prime Minister*) to hurry up with the negotiations & then I can come home to you. For ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

29<sup>th</sup> August, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, Your letter of July 5 arrived on your birthday, not in a regular mail, but with a few naval letters. It is quite my latest news. I was afraid you would be anxious, but after our first telegrams fro **Tatsien** Mr Davies & I agreed it would be better not to telegraph home, until we were actually out of the woods at **Shanghai**. It has been raining heavily last night & today. I must have caught a chill as I have been laid the last day or so, all right now. We have moved into Harry Base, Ironside's house. It was quite empty of furniture, but had all the windows & verandahs filled out with sandbags which we've cleared out & gradually furnished it, & now our dining room looks quite smart. We have a Chinese cook & provisions are gradually coming in. We got our first eggs today. The naval brigade were going down tomorrow, but they have to wait as they can't get their heavy guns over the roads after rain. I've heard that Major Renny-Tailyour has arrived at **Tientsin** & will come up here quite possibly. This may end in my going somewhere else, as I don't see what work there is for two of us, hardly any for one unless we move out into the country. Yesterday the triumphal march through the Imperial City took place. I went as a spectator, and had a fine view first of the troops of each nation entering, then wandering about the Palace, audience halls & courtyards. There was some beautiful jade & bronze. You will see from the papers such mauch later news. We hear that Prince Ching & two ministers are coming in to treat. The empress Dowager & court have fled towards the west. There several places we ought to visit & punish; one is **Pao-ting-fu**<sup>12</sup>, the centre of the Boxer movement 100 miles to the south.

“Sept. 1. Nothing has happened the last few days. We have occupied a place 5 miles from the railway line, so as to begin repairing the line. Every sleeper has been burnt, & every rail thrown down the

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12 Now Baoding?

embankment. Everyone is busy clearing up the place & soon there will not be many signs of the siege left. A mail did turn up yesterday, but my share was my newspapers of the same dates as the letters I received on the march up. We've had heavy rain for two days & now there are signs of the cold weather beginning. I hope the post will be a bit more regular soon. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.

"I haven't been out much to see sights, as I haven't been well."

9<sup>th</sup> September, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, I have so many letters of yours before me that I don't exactly know where to begin in writing. It was so jolly having them & feeling that I was once more in regular communication with you. All seemed well & satisfactory. Our latest rumour is that the Russians are going back to **Tientsin** within 8 days. What the object of the move is no one knows. Perhaps it is not true at all, but we all think this will end in a war between someone. So far as the Chinese are concerned I'm afraid there'll be no more fighting, which is a pity as they want a severe lesson, and the story the Govt. will spread in outlying provinces is that the Empress invited or paid the Powers to come here to put down the Boxers & do police work for her. But severe punishment & that not in money is what we ought to exact for the murder of so many missionaries. What has been the end of some, will never be known. It is really like the Indian Mutiny over again in parts. I should like to show you the picture papers & explain the places."<sup>13</sup>

"Your last letter is still of July 5, sent on from Bangalore. I had a good many letters from others which I must answer, so I've been writing most of the day & feel rather tired of it. I wonder whether **Wilfred** will be able to take leave after S. Africa is over. Owing to China leave is pretty well stopped in India at present. Apparently people in England expected **Peking** to make a stubborn resistance as they are sending out a siege train to help take it. The two other cavalry regiments have arrived, the 16<sup>th</sup> B L & 3<sup>rd</sup> Bo Cas (?) at **Tientsin**. They will be useful up here foraging about in the country. There are plenty of armed Chinese 20 miles or so off. I'm afraid I shall not have any more travelling in China for some years. There will be so many disbanded soldiers about that small parties will not be able travel. I hope Wiffs (**Wilfred**) comes out with a Lt Coloneley (*sic*), but it is hard luck being stuck onto transport work & missing the fun, but having all the hard work. If we winter here, it will be the coldest I've had as there is 30° or so of frost often, but nobody knows, we make what arrangements we can. Lamps is the latest addition to our furniture, got out of a well known Boxer sympathiser's house, they burn none the worse. People are gradually opening their shops & houses & we had our first eggs yesterday, an omelet. We have a good Chinese cook. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

24<sup>th</sup> September, Peking, to Ida: "My own very dearest sweetheart, I'm afraid some days have passed since writing to you, but I've been out for 5 days. However on my return I found a dear loving letter of July 27. You had heard that I had arrived at **Shanghai** & was going on service. You little silly billy, why were you so anxious. You know I'd hide behind all the rocks & places I could find, so you are not to be nervous any more. Why here I am living in a comfortable house when I get your anxious letter. However it has made me very happy because you must still be very much in love with me & I adore you for it. I couldn't be safer in England than I am now. But really coming down the **Yangtse**, if the Viceroy of the Provinces had joined in with the people here, I'm afraid my head amongst others would have been adorning some city wall.

"Now for my news. First, rather a blow, a box containing the curios I bought in **Yunnan** fell into the **Mekong** on its way back & was never seen again. I had some nice things too, mostly bronzes.

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13 The Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes 222 Orthodox Christians who died during the Boxer Rebellion as "Holy Martyrs of China". They were mostly members of the Chinese Orthodox Church, which had been under the guidance of the Russian Orthodox since the 17th century and maintained close relations with them. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes 120 Catholics who died between 1648 and 1930 as its "Martyr Saints of China". They were canonized by Pope John Paul II on 1 October 2000. Of the group, 87 were Chinese laypeople and 33 were missionaries; 86 died during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Many Protestants also died during the Uprising, including the "China Martyrs of 1900", but there is no formal veneration or a universally recognized list. ( Wikipedia)

“We went out on the 16<sup>th</sup> to capture a place where some Boxers had their headquarters, marched out to **Lin-ko-chiao**, 10 miles on the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup>, about 800 of us with some Americans. Then next morning we were up before 1, started at 2 & reached the place at 6, found it empty; then went on 3 or 4 miles to a place where there are a lot of temples, that people go out to in the summer. I went over a steep ridge with the 1<sup>st</sup> Sikhs and as the first of them reached the ridge three guns were pooper (?) off down in the valley & everyone ran out of the village & temples. It was just like rabbit shooting. A great many were hit, but some got right away. Then we did a bit of looting, & slept in one of the temples. Next day the bulk of the troops went back to **Peking**, but I stayed to do some surveying, as a post of 200 men were going to stay several days. Then Pearson went (?) to work to blow down a big tower, but he took a long time. One day Norie, Wingate & I went up into the hills. I surveyed & the others caught 75 ponies. Next day we went up still further into the hills & the last day skirting them for about 5 miles to a big temple, which we looted. I got some rather nice things. Then next morning rode in here and found Renny-Tailyour arrived & since then we've been starting the triangulation here, measuring a base & observing from the walls. I am as fit as I possibly can be, darling, only longing to be with you. What price the soldier's wife? One thing I've got to tell Margaret, is the dearest fat Peking pug, long-haired he begs & is such fun. Everyone admired him. I hope you will be all right now about money. I've told the Bank at **Shanghai** to send you home £150, and the Bank at **Bangalore** ought to have already sent you a lot. I found out the cause of the delay. Mr Todd's fault, my pay certificate never arrived & he simply sat still & waited for it & did nothing, damn his eyes. I shall revel in the khaki sweater & the warm things you dear to think of them. It hasn't turned cold yet, but it will soon. The boots you sent to **Sadiya** have come round, only too small across the left foot dear & they were 10s, so I'm afraid the 9's will be much too small, however I'll give them to someone. The belt arrived all right. You can have that fur made up into a coat if you like, so that I can feel you are warm while I'm warm. I'm so busy dear with all sorts of things. I find so little time to write. I got up at 6 this morning & have been writing ever since. 2 o'clock, only just time now to come back to you, darling, how I love you. I long to be quiet away with you somewhere. God bless you my pet. For ever Your own adoring lover, Charlie.”

28<sup>th</sup> September, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, I haven't been able to write for some days, as first I went out with a force for 5 days hunting for Boxers and then the last three days I've had a feverish cold, owing to the weather suddenly turning cold. Our 5 days' trip was very jolly. We went out about 800 strong & one afternoon marched out 10 miles to **Lin-ko-chiao**, a place where we have a post.. Started early next morning, up at 1 am & got to the place we were making for at day break, but it was quite empty. This was just on the edge of the plain. A squadron of cavalry & 1 company were sent up one valley to destroy an arsenal and we went on round the edge of the hills. I climbed up over a ridge just behind the 1<sup>st</sup> Sikhs. As soon as they got up they began firing away for all they were worth; so did some Americans who were there. When I got up I found that the Chinese had let off some jingalls<sup>14</sup>, and then bolted, and they were about 1,000 feet down below. Every now & then two or three would try and run the gauntlet across the space from one village to another with bullets hitting up the dust all round. It was like rabbit shooting, and I must say I didn't feel a bit sorry for them. Owing to international difficulties we are not punishing them half enough. There were a lot of temples below to which we descended & took up our quarters. One had two maserins (*knives?*) and a lot of guns. They were handed over to be looted, nothing valuable but some very interesting things. Next day the main force went back to Peking, & in the afternoon I went up onto the hills surveying with Norie, Wingate & 20 Baluchi's. We also rounded up 75 white ponies belonging to Tartar cavalry. On the 19<sup>th</sup> we, the same party, went still further into the hills. The villagers we met were as meek as possible, offering us pears. I took 10 men & a couple of miles further on, but saw no armed men. Then we got back to camp having been out all day. On the 20<sup>th</sup> we skirted along the edge of the plain to a lot of Manchu bannermen (?) villages which ought all to be burnt to the ground. & on the 21<sup>st</sup> we came in here, riding in in 3 hours by ourselves. I found Renny-Tailyour had arrived, so as he has a theodolite with him we've started triangulation and sitting up on one of the city gates gave me my cold. I shall not stay up the

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14 Hindi: A small portable piece of ordnance, mounted on a swivel.

winter here. Gen. Barrow, the Chief of Staff, is not at all keen on surveying, so that if we can't go out there will be nothing for us to do. So I think we shall go to **Shanghai**, and spend the winter maybe go back to India. Anyhow I'm pretty certain I shall be home for my **Chatham** course in April 1901. It was a great blow to hear that the boxes containing all the things I bought in **Yunnan** last year were lost. The mule carrying them fell into the **Mekong**; nothing of any great value but mostly old bronzes I had picked up here & there. Much love to you all. Ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

2<sup>nd</sup> October, Peking, to Ida: "My own very dearest sweetheart, I'm very well, only I want to be with you. There is no news here, but an expedition is coming off soon, English & German to **Paoting-fu**<sup>15</sup>, 10 days from here. Unluckily I'm afraid I shan't go. It is the only chance of seeing any more fighting. I went to an auction of loot at the Italian auction & don't be angry spent 170 dollars i.e. £17 on a Princes court dress. It is awfully fine, & everyone admires it & says I got it very cheap as a similar one went for 450 dollars the other day. It will do as my fancy dress for the rest of my life; but you see now you've had that £1,000 left you, I feel as if you don't want any money from me & I can spend it on myself. However I'm in treat for a bangle for you, haven't got it yet, so I won't tell you what it's like. It isn't anything very grand. Your khaki sweater turned up today. It is lovely, you darling & I love to think you made it. Heaps of kisses for it. I will write to aunt **Mina** (*a sister of her father's?*) & thank her for the arms. You won't mind darling, will you, but I'm going to pick out the initials on the chest, it looks like Salvation Army. The other things haven't turned up yet, but big parcels come up by boat & take much longer. I bought a most lovely worked round fan with ivory handle for 3 dollars. By the bye the short for dollars is \$, see, now you know all about it. Thanks for sending the Times, I enjoyed them. Their news & letters are the best from here. Dr Morrison, the chief correspondent I know well, a very nice chap. Captain Hume is on his way out with the ballon (?), he is in the Survey. I don't know whether you met him. All the R.E.s are going to be photoed today, I will send you a copy. I hope you belong to some reading rooms to see the picture papers about Peking. I'm sorry **Chucky**<sup>16</sup> failed for Sandhurst, but you don't say by how much. I long to see **Violet**, she must be a darling, and you are much more of a darling for being her mother. I've only one photo of you but that is on my table always & I feel proud of my pretty wife & hope everyone who comes into the room notices her. If we are to be so much apart the Empress of Russia will have a boy before you do, so be a good girl when we do meet. Now I must stop for a bit, after kissing your photo.

"Oct. 6. The days slip by & I find so little time for writing. It is easier to write when I am quite by myself. Nothing is being done here, except that we have occupied the Summer Palace, 10 miles out & I must go out & see it soon. What a sill old billy you are to be frightened about me. I'm all right in a nice house wearing a long sheepskin coat with ermine cuffs & getting along all right, but all the time, sweetheart I do so long to be with you. I feel as if it was so much time wasted, but all the same I am really delighted to have been on service.

"Oct. 10. You poor neglected darling, I'm treating you very badly in the writing line, but I adore you none the less. I had a trip out to the Summer Palace & that took 2 days. I enjoyed seeing it very much. We rode out one morning & spent the day wandering about it & then had a little duck shooting. I looking on as I hadn't a gun & then came back next day. Then (*sic*) since then I've been making a plan of some new quarters we are to take up & now the **Paoting-fu** expedition is to start on the 12<sup>th</sup> and that means getting a lot of plane tables &c. ready. I am not to go as Renny-Tailyour goes. He is very nice about it and it is only natural as I had the advance on Peking, he should take the next thing that is going. I expect you will be delighted I'm not going, but I don't think there will be any fighting. Renny said he had written to you. I should like to get off back to India so that you could join me. There isn't work for two survey officers together. I caught a chill at the Summer Palace which has given me the last three nights disturbed, but I'm all right today so far. It has turned so cold and I do enjoy your dear

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<sup>15</sup> The site of the **Taiyuan Massacre** was one of the more bloody and infamous parts of the Boxer Rebellion. It took place on July 9, 1900, in **Taiyuan**, Shanxi province, North China, when the governor of Shanxi named Yuxian, or Yu-Hsien, ordered the killings of 45 Christian missionaries and of local church members, including children.

<sup>16</sup> Her youngest brother Stanley Thomas Grigg 1882-1948, Major, W Yorks Regiment, DSO, MC, OBE.

sweater. I rode in wearing it over my uniform from the Summer Palace, & I sleep in it every night. I wonder how the other things are coming out. You didn't say if they were parcels or a box, so I don't know how to find out. I looted an actor's coat & some flags out of our future quarters today. Now I must pack up all my things & that will take some time. I have practically no china, as I thought it was so likely to break & the old valuable china is not very beautiful, except some of the big bits. It's a nuisance there being no regular English mail day here. Your photo leans up a beautiful cloisonet vase. Manifold said it was a very good photo of you, and asked to be remembered to you. It's time I got another letter from you. I love having them, brings me near to you. You are always dear to me. I feel as if the time would never pass to our meeting. You see it was rather hard having one expedition on the top of another without a glimpse of you in between. Heaps & heaps of kisses you darling. But I do want a good loving hug from you. I'm writing a cheque for £36, 4s, 0d here for the loot auction. It will be on Cox & so will reduce you by that amount. Did I ask you to send some money £1 to **Una** (*his older sister*) for the village library; if not will you do so. God bless you darling. My great prayer & wish is to be with you soon. For ever Your very devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

“Kisses to my three daughters, but more still to their dear pretty mother.”

12<sup>th</sup> October, Peking, to Julia: “A force started out this morning for **Paoting-fu**, about 100 miles off. I wish I could have gone too, but Major Renny-Tailyour went as Survey Officer, so I stay behind & look after the survey work here. I haven't been over fit the last few days, owing to getting a chill out at the Summer Palace the other day. The weather is delightful, but it has turned decidedly col. Everyone else in this house has gone out, so I am by myself & shall probably go over for my meals to the remains of the other headquarters which only consists now of General Barrow and Phillipps the D.A.A.G; but being by myself gives me more time for writing. Our visit out to the Summer Palace was a jolly little trip. We rode out, three of us, one morning and slept out; it is about 10 miles out. The old Summer Palace destroyed by us in 1860 is a couple of miles off. The new palace is at the foot & up the side of a small hill, with quite a lake on which there were 4 small steamboats. We had some duck shooting in the afternoon after walking all over the place and slept in the theatre. It is all very new & the grounds have not had time yet to be at their best. The place has also been thoroughly looted by the Russians. Now what is left is being collected by us & the Italians to divide between the different allies other than Russian.

“A mail came in yesterday, of Aug 31, one letter from **Ida**, but none from you & none from anyone of Aug 24, but they will turn up all right in a few days. I don't think it is yet settled what becomes of the Survey Party for the winter, but I think we shall most probably go off to **Shanghai**. I forget if I told that I had heard officially that the **Chatham** Course was not to be held in 1901, so my only chance of getting home next year, will be if they give us 3 months special leave for this expedition, which they nearly always do. Anyhow not having a **Chatham** Course in 1901, they are nearly certain to have one in 1902. We shall very likely leave the Legation soon as two big houses are being cleared for the Headquarters & Offices. I went over them the other day. There are a lot of beautiful black wood carved tables & chairs inlaid with mother-of-pearl & one great big bed of the same make, but that is I think allotted to the R.A. Quarters. Until this expedition comes back peace negotiations will fall into the background, as **Paoting-fu** has to be well punished first, but the general opinion is that there will be no fighting. Altogether about 4,000 men go from here & the same number from **Tientsin**. General Gaselee commands the lot when they meet. If I knew I was going to stay the winter here I should take up Chinese, but it is not a language that can be picked up, it must be studied hard. I am so sorry you had been unwell when you wrote. Mind the winter mother dear. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

14<sup>th</sup> October, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Two parcels arrived today from you, warm things, everything lovely, especially the sleeping sack. Now I am really well supplied and are a real darling to have thought of it all. I am much better today, but it is getting so cold. My hands are so cold it is difficult to write, but in the sun it is nice & warm. Capt. Ducat of some Bombay cavalry regiment turned up yesterday & sleeps in this house, but we go over to Gen. Burrows for mess. I went for a walk

yesterday with Mr Upcraft a missionary; he is here as an interpreter, but we met last at **Yachou** where he put us all up for a day. It was from there that we got onto our raft & started down the river journey to **Shanghai**. He had to leave his place & all his belongings behind about 3 weeks after we passed through & we only just got through from **Tatsien-lu** (?) to **Ya-chou** in time as the path we came by was blocked almost directly afterwards by 1,000 dacoits<sup>17</sup> of sorts.

“Two pairs of pale pink long stockings rather puzzle me. I shall use them as bed stockings. I'd like to give you a good hug for all these warm things. I shall pack away all my thin things now. I hope you will make much of me when I come home or you come out to India, quite spoil me. In the meantime you can start thinking where you'll leave the children. Perhaps your mother will change her mind now they are going for a bigger house. If you come out to me in India you may bring **Blanche**<sup>18</sup> out with you. If father agrees the best Canndo-bast (?) would be for him to pay her passage out & give her a dress allowance, but, of course, she stays with us as our guest; but all that I leave to you & mind you I do it for your sake old girlie, because then you wouldn't be so lonely while I'm in office. I should prefer having you all to myself. Now I must go out & get warm after dinner, in fact I shall be in bed soon & I wish you were here. I see from your customs declaration that you spent over £6 on those warm things. It was very unwise of you to send out that sleeping bag, because I shall want to go travelling again just to use it, but my first thought when I unrolled it was, “Why, there's room for Ida too.”

“A mail comes up from **Tientsin** every two days, and I generally get something. I have your letter of Aug. 31, but none of Aug. 24 yet. I wish I had a frame for your photo, but I will get one as soon as I can. Anyhow you look adorable. I feel very much in love with you, although I only had water for dinner and haven't had a glass of port wine for months. I've got a warm Vinakhi serge coat which is a great thing. I think I've been seedy simply from the cold. Now with your nice warm things I'm all right. Please thank Aunt **Mina** very much for knitting the arms of the sweaters, it was most kind of her. It is just right, a bit big & loose now, but then they always shrink. I sleep in it every night & wish I had you in my arms as well, but you needn't tell Aunt **Mina** that. I'll send you home some more money soon. The Bank at Shanghai haven't told me yet that they have sent the £250 yet, first £150 and then £100, I asked them. Nobody loves me! Now goodnight my pretty little wife.

“Oct 15. I've been busy all day cleaning out with the help of about a dozen coolies our new quarters, such a heap of broken rubbish, but I bagged three big Chinese bowls, new, but with five dragons running about on them. An International Club is going to be started. The French sent round to ask for an English officer who could talk French to act on the committee. A notice sent round to all the regiments only produced one officer who knew French 15 years ago, so when Gen. Barrow mentioned this at lunch I thought to myself, “Why, dash it all, I'm as good as that,” & said so & volunteered to go on the committee, which may give me something to do. Anyhow I shall get to know some of the foreign officers which I want to. We have to turn out of this house very soon & so now I must set to work & pack. Our new quarters want a good deal of seeing to, stoves particularly, but when they are well furnished they will be all right. I wasn't disturbed last night, and only been twice today. I think we shall soon get Reuters telegrams sent here & gradually things will become more civilized. The more civilized they become, the more I want you. Oh dear! Oh dear, I do so miss you.

“After dinner. I had to come away early in answer to an urgent call from nature, and it is too early to go to bed, so I've got into my fur lined Chinese coat & feel comfortable. Your dear photo is lying just alongside my letter to inspire me. I wish your photo was you, & my letter was me! If you can send it out conveniently a Christmas pudding would be very welcome; only don't forget it takes 1½ months to get here, so I'm afraid this hint is rather late in the day. Did I tell you to have your fur coat made up, and also to have your miniature painted. I want very much for you to have the latter done. I wonder whether **Kitty**<sup>19</sup> has had a boy. I see Capt. Robertson of the Survey is up at **Shillong**. As soon as my

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17 Robbers.

18 Her younger sister 1878 – 1974.

19 Another younger sister to Ida who married November 1899 and became Kitty Wake; her first born was Hugh.

cheroot is finished I get into bed, the only comfortable place, only I want my companion.

“21<sup>st</sup> Oct. I haven't written to you for several days, cos why! cos we've been moving into new quarters and have had no end of work to do. However we've moved now (*and*) are getting fairly well settled down, but my dear, the place did want a cleaning. You never saw such a heap of rubbish as we got out & had burnt. Then we had our rooms swept out about a dozen times, walls & ceiling re-papered, new windows put in. Wingate is a first rate chap for cleaning up places. You & he would suit each other. He's now superintending the cleaning of a backyard where we are going to have a kitchen & I am writing to you instead of working. It is only today that my little complaint has improved. Two sorts of medicines did no good, finally a sweet dose of castor oil, followed by a mixture of nitric & hydrochloric acid & quinine also awfully jolly stuff has made me nearly well. We've got heaps more to do to our quarters, a W.C. To construct, the quarters for the other three fellows & heaps of odds & ends of things. We've also found some stoves, furnished our sitting & dining rooms. I had my first dream last night for a long time, two parts. One that I had to drill a company of electrical engineers & forgot the words of command & Gen Barrow was sitting on a big box noting down each mistake. Then I drifted away & dreamt that you wrote & said you wanted a boy! I know Wingate will be round in a moment & turn me out to work. News we have none. Whether I stay up here for the winter or go to **Shanghai** I shall not know for another 10 days or so when Gen. Gaselee comes back from **Paoting-fu**. I wish they would hurry up with mending the railway. Yesterday was a bitter day, a strong north wind, just a foretaste of what is to come & last night there was a frost. There is no doubt that we shall have a real cold winter. I hope to get letters from you on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. I sent home £114-19-1 the other day to Cox (*the bank*); paid up all my loot buyings & now I shall live here pretty cheaply, as there is nothing to spend money on except buying things and I've done enough of that. Really I would sooner spend the winter here than in **Shanghai**. It is colder here a lot, but then it will be ever so much cheaper. I don't stint myself of anything, you dear, but it's like being in camp, no chance of spending money. I should very much like to know what you invested your money in & what interest you get a year, & do you know exactly what father got from Uncle **William's** will after paying everything. & is that to be divided equally on Father's & Mother's death between their six children. Of course don't ask Father that, but you heard the will read. My truest fondest love. God bless you and the dear chicks. I do so want a good hug from you. For ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

21<sup>st</sup> October, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, I've now very little time for writing this week owing to our having to change our quarters into a Chinese house, a big rambling house of which we have our yard & rooms round it for us five. Only Wingate & myself are here, so we've been hard at work. You never saw such an awful state of confusion the house was in at first. We had two days hard work with a dozen coolies simply to clear the rooms.

“Oct. 22. I didn't get very far with my letter yesterday, Gen. Barrow turned up & I had to show him over all the quarters. There is a post every night now, & the winter may be said to be begun now. As long as the wind isn't blowing it's delightful. Your letter with **Una & Mary's** (*bis older sisters*) of Aug. 24 came 3 days ago, a week quite after the mail of Aug. 31 came; that was owing to the French mail steamer being delayed at **Marseilles** through strikes. An Australian naval brigade arrived here two days ago, 250 strong from New South Wales, fine looking men. 250 Victorians went on the **Paoting-fu** column. This house has been very thoroughly looted before we came in, that is why it was in such confusion. I wish I had my camera with me, in fact, I keep perpetually (*sic*) that I had had a month in India between the two expeditions, just to fit out again & also settle up accounts &c. of our job before beginning those of another. I haven't been very well the last fortnight but have no time to lay up. I shall be all right as soon as we are settled. We have altogether five quarters & a mess & dining room. The walls had to be cleaned & re-papered, likewise the ceilings, new glass & doors put in & all the yards well cleaned. Now Wingate & I are fairly comfortable and the quarters of the other 3, who are off in the **Paoting-fu** column are being got ready, but yesterday all the paper hangers bolted for some reason. There is a rumour that **Paoting-fu** was occupied by the **Tientsin** column on the 14<sup>th</sup> without any fighting, which I'm glad of, not being there, but all the fellows who went will come back very

disappointed. I hope they have blown up all the public buildings in the place. Meanwhile negotiations are going on here. Old Li-hung Chang goes about from one Legation to the other trying to get terms. He has a very small retinue & has Russian sentries with him. I am still doubtful as to whether I shall stay up the winter here or not. I should like to know definitely soon, and when the end of all this will be no one knows. Personally I'm quite certain China will be divided up, in spite of all the Powers saying they don't want to. They all say administering a province of China would be so difficult but it wouldn't I'm certain. The Chinese haven't the faculty of governing, but are very amenable to a good government which they have never had. I have to go off now to a meeting to start an International Club.

“Afternoon. We spent about two hours this morning discussing the Club. The American being the senior was appointed President, & I was secretary, which means all the work. It was very funny. The Frenchman could only speak French, the Italian also French, the Russian nothing but his own language & a few words of French, the Austrian didn't turn up, the American spoke a very little French, the German spoke only German but he brought another officer who spoke a little English. Out of all this jumble I had to make notes & write down the decisions arrived at, mostly appointing sub-committees, the most important one finding a suitable building. I have as colleagues a Frenchman who can only speak French & a German who can only speak German! There were several funny episodes; one when the French officer got up, laid his hand on his heart & said that when the armies left Peking the Club would be handed over to the Legations as an everlasting testimony of the good feeling &c. which had existed between the different armies; on which the American said across to me in broad American, “These foreigners always do the sentimental.” Then the Frenchman suggested that all officers be ordered to join the Club. This was not carried & the American said, “Why, if our General was to order all to join, not one officer would join.” The Japanese who spoke French very well suggested that the Governments be asked to subscribe. He said his government would subscribe anything he asked. You see they want to be recognised as one of the great nations. This will all give me plenty to do which I wanted; as I have my own work in addition, I shall get to know some of the foreign officers. As soon as I know that I am to stay here I shall start learning Chinese regularly. Much love to you all. Ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

22<sup>nd</sup> October, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I sent you off a letter today, but always feel inclined to write again at once. I got a verbal message in from Renny-Tailyour today that we were going in to **Shanghai** for the winter; he had asked General Gaselee. Now if I have to stay the winter in China I would sooner stop in **Peking**, but then going to **Shanghai** is nearer to you and easier to get away from when the show is over. I've made my quarters very cosy, and we should have been a jolly little mess, comfortable, but cheap. While **Shanghai** will mean spending more money, living in a hotel at first and that sort of thing all means more money than living in **Bangalore**; but in **Shanghai** my letters & yours will be quicker reaching the other, and as I say if I stayed in Peking it would mean a certainty that I should stay all the winter. While in **Shanghai** we might be sent back to India, at any rate it would be possible while from here it would be impossible. Anyhow always address: Capt. C. H. D. Ryder R.E, Survey Dept., British Contingent, China Field Force, via **Hong Kong**.

I went to this meeting about the International Club. The American was senior & presided & made me secretary, so as to write notes that he could read, and also talk French for him. The Austrian didn't turn up. The Russian understood a little French but never said anything. The Italian spoke French but also made no suggestions. The Frenchman only talked his own language. The German ditto but he had brought another officer who could talk a little English. The Japanese talked French well. The American talked American. Out of all this jumble I had to write out the conclusions. We made out sub-committees to report on the site, furniture & have our next meeting next week. My room is nice & warm thanks to a stove. I hope for a letter from you tomorrow. Your letters are so sweet & loving, you dear. Indeed I have a dear sweet little wife & as I look at her photograph, quite good looking. It is now more than a year since we parted, our longest separation. I miss you more & more, my sweetheart. We have a nice little mess dog who has made friends with me & sleeps in my room, also two cats who miao all day & night. They belonged to the house & evidently dislike us & all the alterations we have made.

“Oct. 23. Buzzed about a lot without doing much. Wingate & I went off to Count Walderssee's quarters to call on Col. Grierson & Col. Powell who are attached to his staff but they were out. I wanted to meet Col. Powell as he is **Wilfred's** regiment & was kind in sending news of him to my mother. I may have to go out to the Summer Palace again for a couple of days to observe near there. News has come in from **Paoting-fu**. The Germans had a bit of a fight; wiped out a lot of Chinese; captured two guns. They are going to leave a brigade of Germans there for the winter, and the new line of railway runs down there, keeps up communication by it. Our new kitchen is getting on. I've also been hunting round for a house for the Club, but can't find one. That's all my news except that I adore you, but you don't care about that.

“Oct. 28. I was going out to the Summer Palace yesterday, but it was too cloudy to be of any use my going out; so now I shall probably go on Tuesday. I'm revelling in two letters of yours, Sept. 7 & 14. You hadn't heard from me from **Tientsin**. Most of both your letters was about giving up the house. I certainly should have given it up if I were you, and I think you didn't quite right (*sic*). Considering that you don't want to stay on at Bedford, that the house is expensive, I don't see any advantage in keeping it on. You were going to my mother for two months, which is all right & then that will last you till the end of November. If you stay with your mother a bit & then I should recommend good lodgings for a bit if you can, just to save a bit, dear, because really for yourself & 3 small children £650 a year is rather a lot. I've already written about the fur coat. Have it made up by all means. I have a few fur coats but none good & none sable. I don't know where Gwynne got the idea that I wasn't coming home for 18 months, which of course is nonsense. Why 18 months particularly. Either of these two things will happen, when I get back to India, I will telegraph to you to come or I shall go to India at once, try for the usual 3 months special leave. I've told you the Chatham Course is not on in 1901 therefore it all the more certain to be in 1902. Gwynne didn't lend me clothes, he took me to the regimental store & I bought a Tommy's suit of khaki from the regiment. Why I say lodgings is that I don't want you to have a house on your hands, so that you can come out quickly if I telegraph to you. I wonder so much if you gave notice at the Kindergarten or were run in for and their terms of payment. I hope your Miss Brown will be a success. It is quite time **Margaret** could read; why she's more than 7. I'm very glad **Kitty** has a boy (**Hugh Wake**). It just shows that you could have one if you really wanted to have a baby, but being always unwilling to have one, you only have silly little girls! I think you'll have to have another try. Any photo is nice to have of you all, but I'm sorry **Violet**<sup>20</sup> moved both times, as she is the one I don't know. **Enid** still growing & **Margaret** still shewing her front teeth. I have no particular news today. Wingate went off yesterday to **Paoting-fu** with the Maharajah of Gwalior. The force are expected back here on Nov. 6. I shall have all my things ready for a move. I don't see what we can do in the surveying line in the **Yangtse** valley except just round **Shanghai**. You poor old dear, I'm afraid you've been having an anxious time, but you may be quite sure I'll always look after myself. Today is Sunday, my usual day for sending off letters. You are always in my thoughts & my one idea is how soon I can get back to India so that we may be together once more; because you see I'm very glad to have been on service, wouldn't have missed the **Relief of Peking** for worlds, but now that's over and we are practically just a garrison for the winter; at the end of which the European Govts. Will have settled what is to be done & we shall go back to India. I think myself that the result of all this will be that China will be divided up between the powers, and that will of course mean that we shall have a regular garrison in parts. Quite possibly I may have survey work to do in China for years with say **Shanghai** as my headquarters. That would be all right, climate much better than India &c. & you would prefer China to India, but anyhow just for the next year or two I want to get back to India & you come out to meet me. God bless you darling, fondest love, & heaps of loving kisses. For ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

“Kisses to the chicks & don't let them forget me.”

28<sup>th</sup> October, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, My correct address is; Captain C. H. D. Ryder R.E.

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20 She was born in November 1898 and he must have only seen her between July and October 1899.

Survey Dept., British Contingent, Chinese Field Force, via Hong Kong. Then if I go to **Shanghai** all I have to do is write to **Hong Kong** to have my letters sent there. I have two letters of yours to answer of Sept. 7 & 14. You seemed all well. I haven't much time for writing but by sending an average of 6 letters a week I'm gradually working off arrears. We have just got news of the end of the elections, Conservative majority much as before, which is a good thing in many ways. I have made myself very warm & comfortable in my quarters, but I had a note from Renny-Tailour from **Paoting-fu** saying that we should probably go to **Shanghai**. If I am to stay all the winter in China I'd sooner stay here, it is colder but dryer than **Shanghai**, and in neither place will there be any military operations or chances of going out surveying. I have to go out to the Summer Palace for a couple of days. I'd arranged to go yesterday but it was too cloudy for me to get a good view of some of the distant hills, so I shall probably go on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Tomorrow we have another meeting about the International Club. I am going to see Colonel Powell this afternoon. He lives some way off in the Empress Dowager's own palace about two miles from here. I went there 4 days ago but he hadn't arrived. Political news we only know when we see Reuters telegrams in the **Shanghai** papers about a fortnight old. I don't believe the Emperor will ever come to **Peking** as his capital. It is so difficult to know what the Chines will do, that it is better not to speculate. Only one thing I feel quite certain about is that China will be divided up amongst the Powers. The Germans are siding with the Russians up here as against us. My only companion in our mess, Wingate went off yesterday to **Paoting-fu** with the Maharajah of Gwalior, but the whole column are expected back on November 6. They've had no fighting but rescued a family of missionaries. No news of Watts Jones. I'm afraid he must have been killed. I'm so glad **Ida** & the children were going to you. I hope they won't give you too much trouble mother dear. I particularly want to know what Violet is like, she will have changed most. Thanks so much for having them. Much love to you all. Ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

29<sup>th</sup> October, Peking, to Ida: "My dearest own darling, The worst of having two letters close together is that now I must wait some time for another, but it is very nice getting your dear sweet letters pretty regularly. How did you manage with your £1,000 to buy £600 in Midland Railway & 450 in the War Loan, you must have bagged £50 of mine! I shall now be able to send you home money pretty regularly, only it takes some time to get home. The worst of sort of not knowing how we are off for money, one definitely safe (*sic*) any regular sum per month. However I reckon that at the end of December you will be something like this.

"In hand when you wrote	£100
Sent home by me already	£250
"    "    "	£114
I will send home out of Oct. pay, say	<u>£60</u>
	524

"You will spend in Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec. @ £60 a month. I hope less!! £240.

"That will leave you with about £280 in hand. Now couldn't you invest say £200 in Russian 4 per cent. I will take care that at least £60 goes home every month, generally more. But it is such a great thing to collar the money & invest it. Invest it in your name. I have reckoned well on the safe side because if you are going to stay at **Murhill**<sup>21</sup> & then with your people, you can't spend £60 a month & I shall always send home at least £60. I suppose you will get £30 a year from your £1,000 which is nice. Don't do this investing till you hear from Cox, or see in the pass book that you have received the three sums of money from China, i.e. £250, £114.19.1 & the third one which I will let you know, but it will be much more than £60. I have the equivalent of £180 ready, but I don't want to send it till I know that my account with the Survey is all adjusted. Now be a nice little girl & do as I tell you. Invest as much as you can spare, but leave yourself £80 in hand, and invest it in Russian 4 per cent, in your name. Just write to Cox & tell them to do it. I reckon it takes 7 weeks for money to get home from here, so that the pay I draw on 1<sup>st</sup> November will reach home about Christmas. That is he third remittance I have

<sup>21</sup> Bradford-on-Avon. It would seem a house in Prideaux Road, Eastbourne where they lived from 1909 or earlier was named after this.

mentioned above, on the receipt of which you are to make the investment. Then you see you will after that receive next remittance end of January & soon I will send you home more than you spend, so as to have enough in hand for your passage out & outfit. I've just \$20 of some beautifully worked silks, do for table clothes (*sic*), cushions &c. what fun we shall have unpacking these things.

“30<sup>th</sup>. Oct. I wrote Chancellor quite a long letter this morning. Today is cloudy & windy. You darling I can't tell you how grateful I am for the warm things you sent out. It was simply owing to them that I got well. I hope you have got nice warm things too. The pair of drawers you sent out are very good, sort of double breasted across the tummy. I strongly recommend them though I don't quite know how you could wear that sort. Also the cholera belt<sup>22</sup>, now that would suit you very well. Likewise I don't think you have got warm vests like the one you sent me out. I shall have to investigate what you wear when we meet! I wish we were living together in this house. I am so cosy & my bed is quite big enough for two. I've had a round wooden bath made in which you would look sweet as you couldn't hide yourself. It is only about 9 inches deep. I've a fine writing table, all nicely arranged & so now it is much more comfortable writing that you will get long letters. Pottinger has joined our mess. He is a gunner, was at Cheltenham & was in China last year. I don't care for him. He is one of those chaps who always wants everything done for him. The weather is a nuisance. It's either cloudy or hazy, so I can't go out to the Summer Palace & do the work I wanted to out there. Hume has arrived but I haven't seen him yet. We have two funny little dogs in the mess, Peking pugs, one a black remains with the servants, but a brown one lives most of the time in my room. I am so pleased at the idea that this year we have really saved something; unless I've made a mistake somewhere & I've been through my accounts all over again to make quite sure. I've now arranged to send £150 about, on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> November, that is with this mail or next.

“In hand when you wrote	£107
Sent home by me	£250
“	£115 (nearly)
“ now	\$150
	£622

“You will have received some interest, but then Cox pay my insurance money for me. You have to pay for your expenses for 4 months, Sept. to December & keep a balance of £80. I think you will find that you have £350 to invest, don't talk about it. What I'm interested in is whether we are entitled to travelling allowance or not. Renny-Tailyour said we were, but I don't think so. If I get it I can live on it & send home the whole of my pay. I really think it is so uncertain when I go home or when you come out that you had better take lodgings somewhere to finish the winter; lodgings say by the month if you like. I have the arrangement about remitting money home all cut & dried now so you needn't be afraid about running short. Oh! I had quite forgot that I had drawn that cheque for the loot fund £37 about, well that will reduce you a bit, no matter. You dear old pet, you will think I'm an awful old money grubber, but when our 3 daughters are grown up & want dresses for dances & our 3 sons (*prescient!*) at school, we shall be rather hard up, because I shall not get any increase of pay for 9 years.

“Nov. 5. My sweetest pet, I had to go out to the Summer Palace for a couple of days to do some triangulation so today is Monday Nov. 6. & that's not very far to get in one day. Gen. Barrow told me the other day that he thought either Renny-Tailyour or I ought to stop here, the other go to **Shanghai**. My beloved, do tell Lord Salisbury<sup>23</sup> to hurry up & make peace. We have done our part out here & I want to have my dear little wife with me again. God bless you my dearest. Heaps of love & kisses, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

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22 “It was thought that various factors such as intoxication, exhaustion, overcrowding, chill, damp, filth, destitution, drought, famine and even fear of the disease could all predispose one to contracting cholera. To avoid chill, every soldier in India was issued with a flannel waistband, or “cholera belt”, a practice which continued into the twentieth century.” Kipling and Medicine, Cholera, Gillian Sheehan.

23 Prime Minister.

“I haven't sent the money home yet.”

8<sup>th</sup> November, China Field Force, via Hong Kong, to Julia: “My dearest mother, My latest letters from you all is of Sept.21. I have been very busy this week. The **Paoting-fu** column returned & it was finally decided that the Survey Party should winter here & now on the 11<sup>th</sup> I am to go out with a German column to the north-west to **Kalgau**. We shall be out for 3 weeks, and the general idea is that we shall have some opposition. My how it is jolly going out after being so long in **Peking**. It has been beautiful weather here, only getting colder each day. 8° of frost at night is our coldest so far, but of course it will be much colder than that later on. It is not so much the actual temperature as the north wind when it blows that makes the cold so intense here. I hope we won't have too much of it in the next 3 weeks. I have of course to hand over my work in the International Club to someone and finish up as much odds & ends as I can, before I go, including our mess accounts. We have breakfast at 9, lunch at 1.30, dinner at 7.30. We've just had to move breakfast from 8.30 to 9 as no one would get up in time, except myself of course. This I more like England than India in the way of being quite a long time between dawn & sunrise & no one likes to get up before sunrise unless they are obliged to. I have got quite all right since I wrote last. I'm afraid there will be a gap for 3 weeks or so after this as we shall be marching straight away from here. I now hear the column is to be German, Austrian & Italian, the triple alliance in fact. There have nearly (*sic*) some good news between the different nations already, notably the French & Germans, & the French & us. I'm glad on the whole I am staying up here for the winter. It will be very cosy in our quarters & we form a very jolly little mess, all good friends. There are several improvements to be made as soon as we can get carpenters, more fireplaces & a porch, because everyone says when the north wind blows, one can't sit in a room where the door opens straight out into the open. I have a very comfortable room myself which hardly wants any doing up, other than what I gave it at first, windows & papering. You wouldn't have any idea of a Chinese house, thinking of native houses in India. This one which is a good specimen of a well to do Chinese is really very comfortable. We all face onto a courtyard which has a lot of flower pots in it, but no flowers. If we show any signs of staying on after the winter we should be grateful for seeds; but I think that if peace is not settled by the end of the winter we shall proceed to hunt down the Dowager Empress & I hope I may be on it, and yet I long to be home again too, unless something very interesting is on. Thank you so much for having Ida & the chicks. You know how I long to know what you think of them. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.

11<sup>th</sup> November, China Field Force, via Hong Kong: “My own darling sweetheart, I am going out tomorrow with a mixed column of Germans, Austrians & Italians to the north to **Kalgau**. We shall be away 3 weeks or a month, so I'm afraid you will have to go without letters for a bit & I too. It will be jolly cold, but still it's very jolly getting out of **Peking** for a bit. I have had to hand over my International Club work, also the mess accounts & mapping to different fellows. Now I'm pretty well free & can attend to my darling. It will be too cold for much writing while I'm out, but I will love you like anything each time I get into my lovely sleeping bag. I did a bit of looting the other day of yellow silk book covers from the Imperial book godown<sup>24</sup>. They are a nice size for small table cloth & I have about 50 of them. I may get a chance of picking up something so I am bringing out 15 sovereigns to buy (*sic*) the other troops if I get a chance, so I am not sending off as much money to you as I thought, especially as the mess owe me \$400 for stores. That will be squared when I come back.

“I've been pretty busy all day & now I've only a few minutes for you, my sweetheart. The Madras Bank are sending you about £16, Grindlay about £30 & Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank £90. now you can invest. I am feeling very well darling. Heaps & heaps of love & kisses. God bless you darling & the dear chicks, for ever your own devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

18<sup>th</sup> November, Hsün-hua-fu, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, At last I have a chance of writing & hope to get this sent by the Germans. We have had long marches, a lot of surveying & no fighting except the cavalry in advance had a little. We left **Peking** on the 12<sup>th</sup> & marched 16 miles across the

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24 In India and East Asia, a warehouse, especially one at a dockside.

plain to **Shaho** & next day 12 miles to the end of the plain, then up a long valley & on the ridge we came on the first branch of the **Great Wall**. It is well worth seeing, a regular huge wall built up hill & down dale for something like 2,000 miles. We slept that night just below the pass & next day marched down a broad plain to **Huai-lai**. Then we did two forced marches 26 miles & 18 into here to try & catch the Chinese who were retreating before us. The cavalry went on another 15 miles & took their baggage train, but I saw nothing of that. We have been in houses all the time & very comfortable, but the weather has been bitterly cold. Our party consists of Col. Powell, Wingate & myself. Watts Jones' brother in the navy came out to hunt for his brother, but they have pretty reliable news now that he was killed July about 10 days west of here; & Hamilton a newspaper correspondent. We halted here today but I was triangulating all day on the walls. Tomorrow we march to **Kalgau** which is on the main branch of the **Great Wall** & that is the end of our expedition, & we shall halt there 3 days & return. I had hopes of getting you a sable up here, but the Germans bag everything up here & won't allow us to have anything. The Roman Catholic Church has been quite burnt & all the houses of Christians destroyed. I will try & get another letter in from **Kalgau**. You darling, I am enjoying my sleeping bag. Marching again has put me quite right in side; only I want you more than ever. I may not have time to write to my mother, so just write & tell her you had a short line from me on Nov. 18. I haven't shaved for a week, but no more has anyone else. Now goodbye, my pet. Heaps of love & kisses to yourself & the chicks, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

1<sup>st</sup> December, Chang-ping chou, to Ida: My very dearest sweetheart, Just heard of an opportunity of sending in letters, but I have none ready as since leaving **Kalgau** I've been surveying myself & had no time to spare, but my thoughts are ever with you darling. We have no particular adventures except very cold, one night 37° of frost. Her we are only 20 miles from **Peking** & Col. Powell is going in so that this is a good opportunity of sending in a letter. Now let me think back.

"We stayed two days at **Kalgau** & then our little English force went off a short march 7 miles & then next day 23 miles to **Hsi-wan-tsu** where 15 Roman Catholic priests mostly Belgians & about 4,000 converts held out. They fortified the place but the Chinese were afraid to attack them. We stopped a day there & went 10 miles up the valley & burnt a chief Boxer's house & temple & captured about 600 sheep, cattle & ponies which we let the native Christians keep. Here Watts Jones got certain news of his brother's death, killed by the officials in a town about 8 days to the west in July, horribly tortured too; made me very thankful I got out of China all right.

"It snowed that night. The hills were very bare, not a tree & the country very wintry. We put up in villages & generally got into good houses. They have brick platforms warmed from below to sleep on. I can tell you it was cold, when the wind blew. We all got leather breeches, felt boots & grew beards, so don't look quite our best. You wouldn't love me if you saw me, but I adore you. We shall now circle round **Peking** & come in through **Tungchou** in about 10 days time. We are in a very nice house here where we've met the Germans again. Fancy their General, Count von Yorck died the other day, suffocated about 3 miles back by charcoal fumes, through bottling up his room & not allowing any air to get in, very dangerous thing to do, and a thing we are all very careful about of course. I have had no news of you while I've been out, but I shall have a full budget of news when I get back. I've no loot, all the furs had been removed from Kalgau & the Germans wouldn't allow looting, although they looted themselves pretty freely. However I shall get a few bronze bowls & that sort of thing before I get back to **Peking**. I've been very well indeed all the time & so grateful for your loving thought in sending me the sleeping bag & warm underclothing. Now I'll tell you one or two things I want, a flask, for jungle use & therefore not silver mounted or expensive, one that I shouldn't mind if I lost it; a tobacco pouch, folding flat, not } that shape, a deep pipe, two if possible, each in a separate leather case, not stiff leather but softish, these should also be cheap. I can't think of anything just yet, but I shall often write for things. You can send them parcel post. Do hurry up these peace negotiations. I want to punish the Chinese properly, but I want still more to be with you again. We have had two Chinese dinners, one with 24 dishes mostly very nice, but we all voted the seaweed as very tasteless. Are you going to give me twins next time? I shall have plenty to write about when I get your letters. I wonder if you ever think of

being in my arms again, after so long a separation it will (*be*) sure to result in No. 4. I'm afraid. I crossed the real **Great Wall** twice, but it was in a rather tumble down condition, but very interesting to see, built 2,000 years ago & it's 3,000 miles long. Put that in your pipe. I should rather like a glass of your best port tonight, but we have only whiskey, & not much of that. I like Col. Powell very much, we met him somewhere in the **Kangoa** (?) valley, or I did anyhow. Now darling, it is nearly dinner time, and I must warm myself over the fire first. God bless you, you little dear. Don't forget all about me. I'm very far away but my heart is as ever yours, my pet & I long & long & long for a sight of your pretty face.

“Dec. 2. We went to dinner with the Mahomedans (*sic*), an excellent dinner, 64 dishes of sorts. I've had several letters to write, but love to have a little talk with my darling before I go to my lonely bed, which by the bye is a very comfortable one, thick felt on brick. It is really cold. We all got leather breeches, which are excellent for keeping out the wind. I've also got a bit of a cold, but I'm very well indeed my pet, only I do so long to be with you. The difficulty about ending this show is that the peace conditions are such that the Chinese won't accept them. It is too cold for writing dearest, but my very fondest love is always yours. God bless you, heaps of & kisses, for ever Your very adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

2<sup>nd</sup> December, Chan-ping-chou, to Julia: My dearest mother, Here we are back to near **Peking**, but we shall not get in for some days as we shall circle round to the east. This place is 20 miles north of **Peking**. We left **Peking** on Nov. 12. about 1,000 men all told, mostly Germans, but some Austrians & Italians too. Marched 20 miles to **Shaho** the first day, road quite flat. We started rather later ourselves party i.e. Wingate of the Intelligence & myself, 8 sepoys of the 24<sup>th</sup> P.I. & 6 sowars<sup>25</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> B.L. we got into a good house at **Shaho**, a small walled town. Next day we made a detour round by this place & then to **Nankou** at the foot off the hills. Our baggage came in good time, but the Germans' things got in at 8 pm. all through their want of bundobast<sup>26</sup>, putting carts first, camels next & mules last – fastest last slowest first. Col. Powell was attached to the German staff, but came & lived with us & Hamilton, a newspaper correspondent joined us too. He was waiting for the “Pall Mall” but is a first rate & (?) so like most of the correspondents out here. On the 14<sup>th</sup> we marched up a narrow rocky valley to just beyond the first part of the **Great Wall**, here in very good repair running up hill & down dale; right up among the hills it was a wonderful sight. We camped in a village just beyond, **Chatou**, & were very cold. 15<sup>th</sup>. We marched down a broad plain to **Huai-lai**. & **Sieu** (?) where we found a good house & then had two very long marches, the first still in this plain to **Ki-suing-yi**, 26 miles & the next 20 miles to a big town **Hsün-hua-fu**, this was to try & catch the Chinese troops, 2,000 or so who retired as we advanced. However the cavalry only caught some of their baggage. We halted the 18<sup>th</sup> & I spent the day bitterly cold observing on the city walls. Then we had a 20 mile march to **Kalgau**, where the main **Great Wall** is. But this one has not been repaired & so is only a long line of bricks & stones, piled up about 10 ft high. This is ordinarily a great place for furs, but all trade was stopped. The Germans fined each of these towns in money, ponies & furs, but we saw none of them. We halted here two days & then everyone else went back the same way, but we wanted to explore as much country as we could, so left for the north-east to marches to **Hsi-wantzu** where a lot Belgian missionaries, 15 I think & about 4,000 Chinese Christians had fortified themselves & held out during the troubles. They hadn't been attacked but were very glad to see us. & next day we halted there but went 10 miles up the valley to burn the houses & temples of some Boxer leaders & captured about 600 cattle, sheep & ponies which we handed over to the Christians. Watts Jones R.N. Who had come up to hunt for his brother here heard that he had been killed in July about 8 days west after being tortured by order of the officials. Our journey after that was not very interesting, through bare hills, bitterly cold for surveying, got in here yesterday, and today we halted going 6 miles out to the Ming tombs of the emperors of the Ming dynasty, more like palaces each of them quite bare, but very fine; 13 of them each surrounded by trees. There was one avenue of big stone animals, on each side of the road about life size. Now we are going round the edge of the plain & reach **Peking** in a week. It has been a jolly trip, but no fighting. The cold

25 The name in Anglo-Indian usage for a horse-soldier belonging to the cavalry troops of the native armies of British India and the feudal states. It is also used more specifically of a mounted orderly, escort or guard. It was also the rank held by ordinary cavalry troopers, equivalent to sepoy in the infantry.

26 An organisation, arrangement, from Hindi via Kipling.

is getting very severe, the streams all frozen over, 37° of frost one night. We had two Chinese dinners, as the officials about here, who didn't do much in the murdering line were trembling in their shoes. Tonight we are having dinner with the Mahomadens (*sic*) who are very much friendly to the English everywhere. I shall enjoy getting letters again. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

3<sup>rd</sup> December, **Chan-ping-chou**, to **Ida**: “My own very dearest darling, I sent you in a letter today, but owing to Wingate having a bad cold on his chest we have stayed here today & do a longer march tomorrow. I've been doing odds & ends of things. Col. Powell & Watts Jones went of today & reack **Peking** tomorrow with the Germans. The owner of this house has been presenting us with some things. I have a pair of nice vases, with dragons on them, 160 years old & a fan which will be for you. Nobody loves me. It will be so interesting shewing you all the things, nothing really very valuable, but enough to furnish your house very nicely. As I can't draw my pay till I get back to **Peking**, your money will be a little late this month, but never mind. By the bye, **Ida**, did I ask you to send my mother £20 i.e. £10 for end of 1899 & £10 for end of 1900 for **Spen's**<sup>27</sup> expenses. If I haven't will you send it to her by cheque. I will send you a bit extra to make it up. I am hoping you have invested about £300 in Russian 4%. this is such an excellent opportunity of saving some money, and we shall want it with our constantly increasing family!

“5<sup>th</sup> Dec. We came 15 miles yesterday & 8 miles today across the plain, dead flat to this place **Hsun-ihsien** & now we have decided to go into **Peking**, as it is very cloudy weather & one can't see the hills, so I shall get your letters tomorrow. How I shall enjoy them. We shall have been out 25 days. I expect now we shall not go out again, it will be too cold till March.

“Peking, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. We got in yesterday, 22 miles & a strong cold wind blowing. To my great delight I found 3 dear letters of yours. I am so happy with them. Oct. 4, 11, 18. but somehow the one before that is missing. You had gone to **Murhill**<sup>28</sup> & found one month would be enough. Do as you like, you dear, so long as you are happy & well & love me. I hope you had a jolly time in London, of course the lodgings were expensive but still a bit of a bust now & then does one good. I had a jolly long letter from Father. He said **Enid** was “as pretty as you make 'em”. **Violet** was like me, so I can quite realise how lovely she must be. My mother was so pleased with **Margaret** & **Enid**, so good & obedient. **Violet**, she said, “You can't expect a person of 2 to do everything she's told to.” Altogether my letters have made me very happy. I have a bit of a headache today & I've had to arrange my room, as my old room was taken as a mess dining room. Renny-Tailyour bought me some silk while I was away, rather good, rolls with dragons & one piece of plain grey silk you must make some use of one day. It is a dull day & very strong wind. The worst of being away for a month is I find so many letters to answer, I don't find time to devote myself to you, but things will settle down in a day or two. **Blanche**<sup>29</sup> wrote me a letter too. I am really longing to shew you the things I've got. I only wish I could have got you some pearls, darling, but my love is better, isn't it? I found Lestock Reid had come here, as judge-advocate-general, had a talk with him this morning.

“Aug. (*sic*) 7. I'm not getting on very fast with my letter but I take a long time settling down again. This month I am sending home about £100. this will start from here on Dec. 10. but my money has to go through the bank at **Shanghai** because they give a much better rate of exchange than the bank here, so I suppose it will take about a fortnight longer than my letter. I hope the money I'm sending you home is reaching you all right. I've sent home from China, £250, £114.19.1 & £90. This last I haven't heard from Shanghai that it had actually gone. Then the Madras Bank Bangalore are to send you something & also Grindlay, Groome & Co. Bombay. Now as I say this month I send home £100 about. You ought to be saving money hand over fist. Living, & we live very comfortably is cheap here & I have no expenses,

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27 This is a rare reference to his older brother Spencer 1852 – 1912 who was educated at Hailebury College & Keble College, Oxford. He was a teacher until admitted to an asylum (Epsom?) in 1884 after patient attempts by the family to cope with his mental health.

28 Near Bradford-on-Avon

29 **Ida's** younger sister.

so we shall never have a better chance of saving. We know very little here about the peace negotiations. You will see more in the papers than we know here. It is on these peace negotiations depends how long we shall stay up here.

“You darling, although I'm so sorry you should have been so anxious about me, it has made you doubly dear to me to know how anxious you've been. But you needn't be any more anxious darling, less anxious than if I was in India, because the climate here is so splendid. I'm as fit as possible. An English mail is expected tonight. The river down to **Taku** is frozen over, but the railway will be opened on Dec 10 & now letters are landed at **Shan-hai-kuan**<sup>30</sup>, come down the coast by train to **Taku** & then up here.

“Dec. 10. I spent 120 dollars yesterday in a curiosity shop. I'm so glad you are not here! You would want to buy such a lot of things. I bought 4 really beautiful small Chinese bowls, genuine old 1730 & also two red lacker (*sic*) boxes about the same age. Red lacker is not made now, the art is lost so it is worth having specimens. Then today my interpreter gave me a 4 fold screen, the wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl & the 4 panels of flowers & birds worked in silk. I have already one, so it will do nicely for your sitting room. They've brought out new regulations about the exam in Chinese, so I am going to take it up hard now. Reward Rs1,000. My teacher is to come today & I'm to do 3 hours a day with him & as much as I can by myself. Wish me luck, because if I passed, you might get some of the reward. I can find no jewellery to buy here. I shall have my day nicely partitioned out, get up at 7.30, which gives me an hour before breakfast. I've just written a letter to Father. My stove is brought in & my bath. Breakfast at 9. Chinese teacher 10 – 1. Lunch 1.30. Then in the afternoon I shall have an hour or two survey work & a walk before tea. Between tea & dinner I shall have 2 hours & after dinner an hour, either working at Chinese or writing to you.

“I've just been to the bank & in my other letter is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of exchange for £105 & also the one for £90 which has been sent from **Shanghai**. The 1<sup>st</sup> of exchange have gone direct to Cox & Co, so you need do nothing with your 2<sup>nd</sup> unless Cox & Co haven't received the 1<sup>st</sup>s then your 2<sup>nd</sup>s are good for the money. So there you are. Now darling please don't think because you have a lot of money at the bank that you must spend it. I'm sending so much home so that you can invest it. Very much love, darling sweetheart, heaps of kisses from your most devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

“Kisses & much love to the chicks. Please send Father the letter enclosed in other envelope.”

8<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, Back in **Peking** to find 4 mails awaiting me. We got in on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The weather got too bad, a strong north-westerly wind (?) icy cold & the air full of dust, so we thought we had better get back. A very bad day coming in 22 miles, the coldest in here was yesterday 25° below freezing & 16° below freezing at midday, so you see we are having it pretty cold. It is a wonderful country for extremes of heat & cold considering that 4 months ago we were marching up to Peking with men dropping from sunstroke by the score. I had a lot to do when I got in as my room has been changed, my old room being now the mess dining room. So I've had to resettle my things & can't lay my hands on all the things I want just yet. Thanks so much mother dear & **Una** & **Mary** for having **Ida** & the children. I'm so glad **Margaret** & **Enid** gave little trouble, & **Violet** is just at an age to develop a will. Nothing much seems to have happened here, no one knows what will happen in China or how long we shall be here. The railway is to be opened on the 10<sup>th</sup> Dec. which is a good thing as the river is frozen over. Our letters will be landed at **Shan-hai-kuan** which is open all the year round & then come down the coast by railway to **Taku** & then up here also by railway. A mail came in today, but obviously only half a one. I had a letter from **Ida** but none from you, it will come up in a day or two. The International Club is opened tomorrow, but I am not on the committee now, having had to drop it when I went out. Although the cold is very great everyone is very fit. We are all well examined & anyone unfit to stand the cold sent down a month ago. **Wiffs** (**Wilfred**) seems pretty certain he has to come out to India again. Of course I can say nothing about when I am likely to come home. I'm down for the Chatham course in March 1902, but who knows when this Chinese affair will

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<sup>30</sup> Now Shanhaiguan on the coast NE of Tianjin (Tientsin).

end. I found Lestock Reid had turned up here, he lives close by, as deputy judge-advocate general. Thanks so much for sending me your first impressions of the children, very pleasant to get when so far away. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“Many thanks for all the papers, especially Morrison's account of the siege which I have to lend round. I know him well, a very dear & nice chap & knows a lot about **Peking**.”

10<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I sent you off a letter today, also £105 & now I feel as if I must begin another letter. I wonder whether you like this shape of paper (*quarto*). I must use what I can get. I can make it ordinary size by cutting it in half & then doubling it. I've been hunting around trying to get Wade's book on Chinese, which is the book to learn from. Not being able to get it I've wired to Shanghai for it. I must try & borrow one for a fortnight. I'd better tell you by the bye that I shall not be able to send so much money home next month, so don't spend it all. I hope you had a good time in London. You're quite mistaken about my bed, it is a great spring double mattress, not Chinese at all. The only drawback is whenever I turn in bed, the springs go twanging underneath. I believe with a little practice I could make them play tunes. You darling, fancy I've never wished you a happy new year. You will be near your people at Christmas so will doubtless be a very jolly party, but I know you won't forget me. A very happy new year my darling. I know that the greatest happiness that can be granted us is that we should be together. As far as we know here peace negotiations are not getting on. The Chinese will go on delaying as much as possible hoping that the allies may quarrel amongst themselves or get tired & be ready to patch up a peace. In the meantime these beastly long negotiations keep us apart. I was so glad to get the little photo of **Violet** on my mother's knee & long for the real ones of her. I expect she'll have no truck with me at first. I'm so glad Miss Brown is a success, I hope she won't leave you. I've just got up some pomade hongroise<sup>31</sup>, also some eau de quinine & koko for the hair as in this atmosphere one's hair gets very dry. My room is so nice & cosy. I say, Ida; several times I've thought to myself when I've bought something that it would do very nicely for a present, but the nice things I'd sooner keep for myself.

“6 o'clock. I wrote the above before breakfast, but I don't like this paper, it takes too long to get down a page. Now I'll tell you exactly what I did today. Got up at 7.30 & after bath (every other day) & shave wrote to you & a letter to aunt **Mina** (*a sister of her father's?*<sup>32</sup>), breakfast at 9, then till lunch I was making a list of Chinese maps of this province & putting them in their proper order. After lunch I went down to the legation to thank a chap for getting me my Chinese teacher, then went round to the R.E. Mess, saw Watts Jones R.N. & tried to find young Elles but he wasn't in. Then to the International Club to arrange for inviting the 8 members of the committee to lunch tomorrow. Then back to tea, read a few papers & here I am. My regular hard work begins tomorrow, Chinese teacher 10 to 1, but that will be often disturbed I'm afraid. No matter, I want to get that Rs 1,000, so you may be quite certain I'll work hard. I pay my teacher \$15 a month. I wonder where you are now, my darling. Your last letter is of Oct. 25. not too long. You say you know, “everyone at **Murhill** is writing to you,” as if that would make up, you silly, you know I adore your letters. I see in a Pioneer that **Hugh Wake**<sup>33</sup> broke his collar bone riding in a Gymkhana. **Violet** wasn't well when you wrote. I hope she got all right soon. Don't talk to me about dieting &c. I never had dysentery for a year & more, simply because I take care of myself & you don't. I wish I had looted a good lamp. I have only candles & there's apparently a good draught somewhere. No news about peace negotiations. Oh! One thing is rather nice, we've been given the privilege of telegraphing home at half rates, that is \$1.40 a word. So as soon as I know of some definite address you've got I'll send you a telegram, but addresses like % Cox &c. are too many words wasted in the address.

“12<sup>th</sup> Aug. At 7.30 a.m. I've dipped my pen in the ink three times before getting a start, haven't quite

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31 This was made using lead oxide boiled with olive oil. Both products were used to fix moustaches in place but, if required, could be coloured with lamp-black or umber to hide grey as well.

32 A sister of her father's?

33 Her sister Kitty's husband.

woken up. I think this will be my usual time for writing, but I must each day write one letter besides the one to you. I wonder whether you thought of sending me a plum pudding for Christmas. We have 2 or 3 in tins, but couldn't get any mincemeat. My Chinese coat makes such a nice dressing gown, long, lined with very fine lambskin with white revêrs! I think you made a great mistake not having another infant this year. 3 years between each is a long time. I wish you were here in my little room. My wall is covered with Chinese scrolls shewing what we called the 18 punishments: men being burnt, popped into burning oil, chopped in pieces &c. It's rather nice having one's stove brought in each morning along with chota hazri<sup>34</sup>. I only wish I hadn't to shave every day.

“14<sup>th</sup> Aug (*sic*). I've a tit bit of news for you. Today I heard, only remember this is absolutely confidential; you must not repeat it to anyone; that I've been mentioned in despatches, not among the most best mentioned & therefore I don't for one moment imagine it will mean a brevet or anything. Norie told me that it was worded something like this, the following officers “have also done good work whenever they had the opportunity.” Then follow several names, mine amongst them. You see it is not very much of a mention, but still it is something, and I really did not imagine that I should get a mention at all. I think this applies to the relief of **Peking** & the first month or two afterwards. If we have further operations in the spring I might have another chance. Now, sweetheart, don't forget this mustn't be whispered to anyone, not even to Bichu! I work hard at my Chinese but don't progress much, still I don't expect to feel any visible progress for a month or two. It has turned windy again today, but I am very cosy in my room. Now you dear, goodbye, I must turn too at the dinner.

“Dec. 15. I had lunch today at the Japanese headquarters, talked French. It was interesting but it took me a long time away from my work. Now before setting to work again I must get on with my letter. I saw in a Pioneer that **Wilfred** had left **Cape Town** on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. for India. Everybody here keeps their rooms very hot, mine I like with plenty of fresh air, but a stove just going on. Dearest I'm so longing for this show to end, & for us to be together once more, but don't let our separation interfere, darling, with our love for each other. With me I keep continually missing you, but you have got so accustomed to running your own show that you will get along quite well without me. I'm afraid you will not be an old maid very long after we meet! I shall have to make love to you all over again. There is some talk of an International Medal as well as the English one. My only chance of getting a brevet is for us to have a spring campaign against the Empress Dowager; but I'd sooner be with you, & that is a great compliment, my dear. I'm glad I owed my going on this campaign to no one's influence, but it was very much my right.

“Dec. 17. Too much Chinese & maps yesterday, but I think of you any amount. I've had to banish you off my writing table onto my dressing table while I'm doing Chinese because I can't concentrate my thoughts on so difficult a language with such a sweet lovely face in front of me. I couldn't learn Chinese if you were here. I do half an hour in bed before going to sleep & nip out of bed as soon as I've had my chota hazri to get time for writing &c.

“Will you send this letter<sup>35</sup> on to Aunt **Mina**. I have to be economical of envelopes. Sweetheart don't forget me & keep me much in the minds of the children. Je t'adore. Heaps of kisses, for ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

16<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, I saw in a Pioneer that Wiffs (**Wilfred**) left Cape Town on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. for India. So he is by now back at **Dharmasala** & I wonder when he will get home again. I have started Chinese regularly with a teacher, 3 hours a day with him is all I can spare & as I have to learn a lot of sentences every evening I find I haven't much spare time. This last week I haven't been very regular into my three hours which are from 10 to 1, as I had lunch with Col. Powell one day at the German headquarters, another day at the Japanese Generals & a third day I gave a lunch to the International Club Committee of eight different nationalities, so I've been rather gay. But now I mean

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<sup>34</sup> Hindi: a light meal eaten very early in the morning.

<sup>35</sup> Presumably this must refer to an enclosed letter otherwise he would be breaking the confidentiality he has insisted on her keeping.

to set to work hard, but Chinese is a nearly impossible language. One can pick up enough to go along with fairly easily, but to catch the tones is a job. My teacher, an old man, is very keen & all I have done so far is repeating sentences after him to get the right pronunciation. There is an exam in Chinese but I shouldn't think any officer here would pass as it is supposed to take 1 year's hard work without any other work to qualify. I don't think the thermometer ever goes above freezing in the shade, in the sun it goes to 40°, but we have been lucky not having much wind lately. However most fellows seem to keep very fit., myself particularly so. We have no particular news. Peace negotiations seem to be in the same condition they were two months ago, as the Chinese know that the troops cannot evacuate **Peking** before March, they are in no hurry to accept terms, hoping that if they put it off the allies may fall out amongst themselves. There are plenty of lovely curios in the shops, but pretty expensive. It is wonderful what a lot there are, but they are mostly what was looted by Chinese themselves out of Chinese houses. We had expected the railway to be opened on the 15<sup>th</sup> but the Russians who have the engines will only give up worn out ones which break down. So now the opening is postponed till the 20<sup>th</sup>. I have a good stove with a chimney in my room, but it makes my room so hot, I have it cleared out about 7 pm. we have had to start making a plan of what is called a Hunting Park just south of **Peking** for a spring camp, so that should the Emperor come back, we should move out there & evacuate his palaces &c. I've quite got out of camp hours now & sit up till 11 most nights, the only way of getting through my work. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

17<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart. What a nuisance you are. I ought to be working at Chinese instead of which I feel much more inclined to write to you. I'm longing for next mail as it may bring some photos of you & **Violet**. You see you don't quite understand, never did. When I'm with you I'm quite content to look at your own pretty face & so don't want photos. When I'm away I want them sadly. Unfortunately I sent back the bigger ones of you from **Atuntzu**, so I have only the smaller one which has been my constant companion. You are leaning up against a funny little stone lion I looted. You do look a pretty girl, **Ida**. I wish I could give you a good kiss to say nothing of having you in my arms again! I remembered our engagement day all right & **Violet's** birthday. I don't think it was quite proper of you to arrange the two on the same day<sup>36</sup>, but of course it was my fault too a little bit. You dear old girlie, when shall I get out of this d~d place & meet you again? **Violet** will be so much older than her next brother or sister. Enough, enough it's time for dinner.

“9 o'clock. Awful nuisance, I have to go down to the Temple of Heaven where the 16<sup>th</sup> B.L. Are to give evidence in a court martial on one of their men who was out with us, so I've arranged to do my Chinese in the afternoon. My camp kit arrived today. Longe got it for me in Calcutta: tent, 2 chairs, two tables, chilumchi<sup>37</sup> & india rubber bath, so now I'm all right. & I've had my bed put up, the old pattern, ours you know. What I'm rather in a funk about is Renny Tailyour declares we are entitled to travelling allowance at 10 rupees a day, but I'm certain we are not entitled to it. However we've been drawing it steadily & I believe suddenly one day we shall be called on to refund it. You won't get a very large amount next time, because I have to send something like Rs500 to India to pay for my camp kit & square up accounts. A **Shanghai** mail came in today but no English mail. I hope, darling, after your bust in **London** you've settled down somewhere & are doing the economical. If you really want to live cheaply & yet fairly comfortably, lodgings like our **Bournemouth** ones, somewhere near you Father's would be by far the wisest.

“Dec. 19. My darling, here's another wedding day<sup>38</sup> coming soon. This is by far our longest separation. I wasted all this morning at the court martial. My evidence only took 5 minutes; so I had my teacher in the afternoon. He's a very nice old chap, can't talk any English except yes & no. The first part of Wade, which one is supposed to know for the exam, is divided into 40 lessons. I've done 3, but anyhow it gives me something to do & the time passes quicker. Trains have begun to run between **Tientsin** & here, one a day each way. I bought such a pretty brass slab for \$4 about ½ the size of this sheet with

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36 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

37 Water pot for washing hands (Banglapedia).

38 Their 8<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary being due on 27<sup>th</sup> December.

inlaid dragons on it, but I'm not going to do any more buying now, I want to save money. Some of the things I've got are really valuable, might be worth selling in England if you don't like them.

“Dec. 20. No mail in yet. Hope some may come in soon. We have been about 12 days without an English one. This afternoon I went for a walk with Rigby. We bought a few small things. There are a lot of most fascinating things.

“22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. I'm getting on very slowly with this letter, but I love you just as much as last week, only my pen & ink are not very good, then no mail turns up. I suppose the delay is changing from landing at **Taku** to landing at **Shan-hai-kuan**. I've gone rather dotty on dragons. I bought yesterday two plates with dragons on them. My table gets very untidy. I want your help, only I should find nothing afterwards. Our days pass very regularly here, nothing exciting happens. However there are great rumours that the ministers Li Hung Chang & Prince Ching have agreed on the preliminaries of peace which have been telegraphed to the Emperor. So now everyone thinks it 's quite likely we shall get away in the spring, but I doubt it myself.

“Dec. 25. Merry Xmas to you, my darling. Oh! How I wish we were together. I'm not quite all right just now, such a funny kind of trots, just like I had before, nothing bad. I buy a few things now & again but I want to shew them to you. The fan I meant for you has peacock's feathers on it, so although it is lovely I suppose you won't accept it. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> came your letter of Nov. 2, from London. Mother, **Una & Mary** all right write unusually nicely about you & the children. Mother does always of course. I'm sorry **Violet** had been seedy, but she is a little lady I know so little about. I'm rather amused over your latest great friends the Gwynnes. You know you have greatest friends about once every six months, so you can tell Bluebelle that you'll forget all about her in a few months. However I like anybody who is kind to you. I wonder whereabouts Emperor's gate is? I think your lodgings are reasonable enough for **London**. I expect from your letter that you have every intention of staying some time there. It is a pity you couldn't have stood another month of **Murhill**. I wonder whether your Father has really gone to **Stevenage** or not.

“Dec. 26. This is a rotten letter, darling, but I've been a bit on the trot again the last few days, which makes me slack in between, so I prithee have me excused. Fondest love my darling, heaps of kisses to yourself & the chicks, forever Your very devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

24<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest mother, Your letter of Nov. 2 reached here yesterday. **Ida** & the children had just left & you had just heard that **Wilfred** had left the Cape for India. Now our news is that General Clements has been defeated & that the Boers have invaded Cape Colony. **Ida** & the children seem to have enjoyed their visit very much & I'm so glad you think **Margaret & Enid** so improved. **Violet** is a person I hardly know! We pursue the even tenor of our way. I do three hours a day with my Chinese teacher & two by myself; this with a small amount of making maps & a daily walk fills up my day. There has been a good deal of a sort of influenza about, but I haven't had it yet. The train now runs regularly between **Tientsin** & here & the line has been brought right up into the Chinese City. The weather has been exceptionally fine & warm, no cold winds, so the thermometer hasn't been below 10°. The slightest wind though makes the place awfully dusty & one comes in from a walk very dirty. Every now & then a small band of Boxers collect somewhere & are generally wiped out by some troops. Peace negotiations have got so far that the rough preliminaries have been agreed on & telegraphed to **Hsian-fu** for the Emperor to agree to; but they are a mere outline & the real difficulty will come when the details come to be settled. In the meantime Li Hung Chang is ill, which will probably delay things still further. Looking up an Army List I see that wing commanders have been knocked on the head in native regiments. There is now a commandant then 4 double company commanders & an adjutant, makes 10 altogether, two more than there used to be. This makes **Wilfred** 3<sup>rd</sup> double company commander in his battalion, but Colonel Powell told me he thought **Wiffs** was in the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion now. A Captain Rose of the regiment is also here; he came in command of a coolie corps & is now on the line of communications. A newspaper is going to be started in **Peking** from 1<sup>st</sup> January by some of the correspondents, but we already get Reuters' telegrams fairly regularly each day.

Our clothes are gradually getting more fur on them. Luckily for me **Ida** sent me out a Jaeger sleeping bag which keeps me splendidly warm at nights. I have also long felt boots. I buy a few curios now & again. The Chinese only have confidence in the Japanese & our quarters, all the business is done there. One rather interesting thing is 10 big paintings, about 6 ft by 3; the Chinese call them the 78 punishments; people being boiled alive, thrown onto knives, thrown to tigers, chopped into bits & all sorts of things. I don't know what I shall do with them. They would give Margaret & Enid nightmares for a month. Five of them pretty well cover the walls of my room. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

26<sup>th</sup> December, Peking, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, Life is rather dull just now, because my little inside is not quite right, so I don't feel inclined for work or for writing anything. I should love to get another letter from you, and one ought to come in a day or two. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pair of boots came today but you are a duffer, you got 9's instead of 10's so they are too short & no use. Never mind I have enough to go on with & if I want another pair I will get some from the Commissariat. I sent you off a very rotten short letter today, and nothing has happened since. I went out for a walk this afternoon. Last night Colonel Powell had dinner with us. Tomorrow is our wedding day. You darling, eight years now you've been the great happiness in my life. I only wish we were together. I'm so longing to have the photos of you & **Violet**.

"28<sup>th</sup>. You can feel for me, my dear, I have to take a small dose of castor oil every two hours. The only result so far has been to stop my going, but I don't feel like writing or working. A mail ought to arrive soon; our postal arrangements have been very poor. You dear sweet darling, I should just love to sit & look at you or lie on my bed & hold your hand & listen to you talk, not that I feel a bit ill but only slack. I've put on one of your cholera belts(*see above page 19*), they are such nice ones.

"29<sup>th</sup>. The castor oil must have had what the gunners would call a delay action fuse attached, as it began to operate at midnight, so I didn't have much of a night. I've just been out measuring the place for the 1<sup>st</sup> January parade. I never wrote a line on the 27<sup>th</sup> you darling, but I didn't forget the day. I'm sure I should get well at once if I could get another mail.

"30<sup>th</sup>. Delighted to get a mail this morning, yours of Nov. 9. You seem to be getting on very well without me, so, of course I needn't hurry home. You will have had plenty of money by now, so that will be all right. Talk about wives coming first, my mother seems to have the photo of Violet & I have none, & what I want still more is one of you. How I would live a sea journey with you; the only thing that would make it pleasant would be having you with me. You darling, you must really not grumble if my letters were short. I can tell you, darling, I've had a very rough time of it this last year & often I've written you letters under very difficult circumstances. I'm comfortable enough now except for trots & I will write as long as I can, but as for regularity, why there is no particular day for English letters to go. They just go down to **Shanghai** by any steamer that happens to be going & may or may not catch the mail. You dear, it is so difficult to describe what the things are that I've got. I'll tell you one thing, I've 75 silk squares, yellow embroidered with dragons, about 5 ft square, do nicely for table clothes (*sic*), you will admire them. I've got altogether 8 boxes full of things, china, jade (only a little), bronzes, silks, embroideries. As I've told you quite enough to furnish your house for you. I've a four fold screen, inlaid mother-of-pearl like that tray I brought home last year, with white silk panels embroidered with flowers & birds. Cloisonnet I've a good many bits of, it is enamel on copper & very handsome. Yes, I saw General Gaselees despatches, Gwynne is quite sure to get something. Sorry for your row with the cabby. Yes, please, I should like the Standards very much. I only hope you haven't stopped sending them. The Germans are an awful nuisance; they came up when all the fighting is (*sic*) over & are so anxious to fight somebody that they are continually going about hunting up imaginary Boxers, keeping the whole country in a state of unrest & delaying peace negotiations & I only want to have peace signed & be with you again. How I should love to put my arm round your waist again, as for my "rights", my dear, I've captured Fort Ida pretty often before now & mean to still more often when we meet, so now you know what to expect. A parcel has just arrived from my mother, two pairs of thick socks, a pair of muffetees, two cakes of soap & sundry little tins of soup &c. dear old mother, awfully

sweet of her. Of course one can get them all here, except the socks & they will be very useful. Of course you are not knitting me any more. Renny-Tailyour has just heard that Hare of the Survey has died in Ceylon. He had charge of one of the Burma parties. Do you remember hitting him in the back to attract his attention at the theatre? He is junior to me. I wish the fellows Buon (?) & Fraser just senior to me would retire. I got a notification that I had been promoted to be Deputy Superintendent 1<sup>st</sup> Grade. I have been officiating for a long time, so it doesn't make any difference to my pay. One man retires next year & then I stick in the same place for years, too low down to get officiating promotion to the next grade. You don't mention my tin despatch box, so I'm afraid it's lost. I don't remember what it had in it, but probably the Army & Navy share certificate, my will, my commission & several other papers of value. You might let me know whether you have any of the above in your box; if not, the only that is important is the A & M share certificate & you ought to write to them, say it is lost & ask what to do.

“Renny-Tailyour says he has had about enough of Burma & will try for an Indian party, but I don't know which. I wonder what my party will be. I could get 21 Party if I liked or the Madras Forest Party. What I should like best would be 21 Party if you came out to camp with me in the Shan hills. How would you like that? I've so much more experience of camping that we should be very fairly (*sic*) comfortable & with the railway running up to **Lashio**<sup>39</sup> one could be fairly civilized, once we had bought our tents, stoves &c. it would be very cheap living. You see it certainly is an advantage getting Burma allowance of Rs100 and double travelling allowance Rs300 a month instead of Rs150, that is altogether Rs250 a month extra while in Burma. I think you will like to see the country too, of course this is only talk, as I don't know when I shall get away from here. I wish you would find out from Cox what their telegraphic address (*is*) & inform that should a telegram come from China to Ryder % them it is for you; because you see the river melts about 7<sup>th</sup> March & that is a very likely time for some of us here to get away. There isn't much work for me here, so I think myself that if the troops here are reduced I'm very likely to be one of (*the*) ones sent back to India & as soon as I know I should telegraph to you. As I shall not be able to send a long telegram, I'm going to discuss what would be best for you to do. Of course it all depends on when do I go back to India. There will almost certainly be a Chatham Course 1<sup>st</sup> April 1902, then 3 months privilege leave will almost certainly be granted to the China Field Force, but it generally takes a little time to sanction & all that. Now I can use that either to go home & fetch you, or instead of going home for the Chatham Course go home 3 months earlier, that is leave India on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1902 or take it possibly at the end of my Chatham Course. Now from your point of view, if you got a telegram from me it would probably be, “arrive Calcutta April 20” or whatever the date would be. Now I couldn't get my leave sanctioned for a couple of months or so, while you would get the telegram quite a month before I arrived in Calcutta, and you could settle up affairs at home & come out nearly as quickly as I get to India or anyhow a fortnight after & that way we should be together two months sooner. But then supposing time went on & I couldn't get away from here, one of the first (*things*) we would have to consider (*might be*) whether it would not be better for you not to come out, but wait for me to come home; that I hope won't happen. The Chatham Course on English pay will run away with our savings.

“After dinner. You see your letter although it was rather a short one is having a good effect. I've just started on a new medicine.

“1<sup>st</sup> January (**1901**). A very happy new year to you my darling sweetheart. I hope it may bring us soon together. You will be glad to hear that peace negotiations are progressing fairly satisfactory (*sic*). I've gone onto medicine No. 3, but as it has opening effect first, I can't yet tell whether it's doing me good. Anyhow you'll be glad to know that it is nothing of a dysentery nature, so Manifold said. I never thought it was, but he came early this morning to inspect & make sure. There was a lot of noise last night, fireworks &c. I sat up to see the New Year in & wondered whether you were thinking of me.

“I've discovered some of this paper, it is so much nicer than the other. Today being New Year's day I

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39 The largest town in northern Shan state, Burma, about 125 miles north-east of Mandalay.

gave myself a holiday & now tomorrow I must buckle to again. If I ever pass the exam, the Rs1,000 will be well earned. The general idea is that anyhow a brigade may stay on in China but that the bulk of the force will be withdrawn in the spring and as far as I can see that will include my going away. Now, you darling, in order to be ready to come out, should I telegraph to you, I want you to think about where you'll leave the children. Of course I know you had arranged before with Aunt **Mary**<sup>40</sup>, but although I think that would do all right for the children. I really think she is not strong enough to stand children for long; but I must leave this entirely to you to arrange. Anyhow it wouldn't be for very long as we should come back early in 1902. Has Mrs Barns really given up her house, if not & they are still willing, I should be all for going there, that is if you arranged matters with Aunt **Mary** first. I mean after her offering to have the children, I don't want to hurt her feelings, I only think of her when I say the children had better not go to her. I will write a letter to Aunt Mary which you read & send on when you write to her on the subject. Then I want you to keep me regularly posted as to what amount of money you have at Cox. You see it isn't much use telling me I have so much at Cox, unless you also tell me what he has received, because I don't know whether the amount you say includes money I've sent home. You know I send you home as much as I possibly can, but I must arrange for you to have say £60 for your passage out & expenses on board. The ticket to **Bombay** is I think £55 & then for your dresses &c. you said once £60, I remember. Then whoever you leave the children with should be paid 3 months in advance; so that you see £150 will not be too much to have in addition to what you would spend on living & ordinary expenses up to your leaving England. Besides sending money home to you I have to send something like Rs600 to **Calcutta** to square up my account & then I still can't believe that we shall be allowed to draw travelling allowance & it will be a blow if we have refund it all. I have advanced sufficient money to the mess to pay my mess bills for the next three months, so I shall spend next to nothing here. Anyhow I will send you £75 this month very likely by this mail. Now, darling, be as economical as you can for the next few months, there's a dear, but enjoy yourself as much as you can. I'm so afraid that as long as you have a good balance at Cox you think it's all right. I know when I'm at home I'm much more extravagant than you are, but now being in a place where I can't spend money I can preach economy to you! I'm not going to buy any more curios here. I've spent quite enough money, but you will I hope like the things I've got, and won't it be lovely unpacking the boxes. I've forgotten myself what I've got.

"I was talking to Jamieson, one of the British Legation & he seemed quite hopeful about peace. The Chinese have definitely accepted the draft agreement, and now in a day or two will commence the discussion as to details; and even if they aren't all signed before the spring there is no reason why the bulk of our forces shouldn't go away. The Australian contingent 500 strong have got orders to go back in the spring. I've had a fur cap made for me, but the winter so far has been so extraordinarily mild that the ice is open off **Taku** again. Anyhow it is open permanently about 7<sup>th</sup> March, that is only two months hence.

"I'm so curious to see your new friend Bluebelle. How much of that is her real name? Is she as fond of having babies as you are. I think I'm feeling better, that is why I have been able to write more to you today. You don't tell me much about the children's lessons. Can **Margaret** read yet? She ought to soon. My mother sent me out such a nice knife, you know like your big plated one but smaller. Did I tell you that the fan I meant for you has got peacock feathers on it so I suppose you won't have it, such a pity because it is very pretty; but couldn't it belong to me & I might lend it to you, would that be all right? No sooner do I get a letter from you that (*sic*) I look forward to the next one. Fancy if I left here in the middle of March, why we might be together by end of April. I couldn't send you a telegram for Christmas as the arrangement for private telegrams is not ready yet, but it will be in a few days. Now you darling, I must titivate a bit for dinner, au revoir & heaps of kisses.

"Jan. 2. Rather better today, darling, but you're not to worry yourself, I'm not really a bit bad, quite a mild attack just annoying, don't you know & nothing more. Today I've got rumbles all day which I think is a good sign, a sort of last protest of my inside before getting all right. No more news today.

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Ironside Money, 1835-1903, sister to Julia who was married to Mowbray Thompson.

Did a good morning at Chinese, than after lunch too the Khalassis to some empty godowns for wood & now here I am. I wonder whether you got my letter asking you to send **Una** £1 for the village library & £20 to mother. In my absence don't forget to subscribe to any charities you think fit. I think £1 or £2 each winter for the poor of **Murhill** & I think you said you had subscribed for the wounded. Now darling, goodbye, my very fondest love. Sending kisses is a poor recompense for one good hug when we meet. Kiss the chicks for me, for ever Your very devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, Peking, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, Very many thanks for yours of Nov. 9. You also enclosed a letter about the **Chatham** Course. I had heard about it, but many thanks all the same. Your parcel too arrived by the same mail. One of your pieces of soap is already in use (I don't mean that I hadn't any before, but yours is much nicer). Your knife which is such a good one is on my table, *vice* an old Govt. one banished to the office; a pair of socks I'm wearing; the mittens will be very useful, only we've had a very curious bout of warm weather, so that I haven't worn gloves out of doors for several days; and the other things will all be very useful as soon as I go out on a trip somewhere or if we have a spring campaign. Thank you so very much mother dear. I haven't been at all well this last week, tried three medicines, but No. 4 is I think doing me good & I feel much better today. Today, besides being the parade for the Queen Empress, was also the Australian Federation & the Australians have been having a great day of it. Last night they were letting off crackers till about 2 o'clock & I expect the Chinese were in an awful funk, because it very difficult to distinguish the noise of a cracker & a modern rifle. I believe the parade was very good but I couldn't go, not having full uniform & not being well. Peace negotiations really seem (*to be*) progressing. The Chinese have agreed to all the clauses of the preliminary treaty, and the discussion on each clause of the regular treaty begins in a couple of days. The general idea is that we shall leave a brigade until the actual treaty is signed, but that the bulk of the force will be removed in the spring; but of course lots of things may develop before then. I shall not go out anywhere the next two months as our policy is one of masterly inactivity while the Germans are constantly on the move thirsting for a fight as they came up when it was all over. It isn't the best thing for peace negotiations. My learning of Chinese doesn't make very good progress although I put in a good many hours of work a day. I'm sorry you returned a Liberal although now a days I can see very little difference between some of them & Conservatives. It is a pity there wasn't a really clever man available to be sent here as minister. Sir Ernest Satow<sup>41</sup> is a great Japanese scholar but nothing much else. I'm afraid all my letters haven't got home, as you talk of having one of Sept. 9 & Ida a day or two after of one of Sept. 24. The postal arrangements were very bad the first two months. Now we have the railway running regularly, one train a day each way, bringing up piles of stores. We are very comfortable in our mess. We bought easy chairs but otherwise have most lovely Chinese furniture. Our dinner chairs are inlaid mother-of-pearl with marble seats, & weigh about 200 lbs each; then we have a huge stand mirror with carved black wood frame & other things. I should like to have £200 to spend now & some kind of friend to pack the things & see to their getting home safely. There are so many lovely things, I now avoid the curio shops, they are too tempting. Much love to you all. Ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

3<sup>rd</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Decidedly better today; all yesterday I had the most wonderful rumbles you ever heard. There is the Imperial book godown near us to which we pay occasional visits. Col. Powell, Wingate I went yesterday & I brought away 21 more of these yellow table clothes (*sic*). I'm not certain they wouldn't make rather good curtains a lot of them together. It was snowing last night & this morning but only about 6 inches. At last there is a notice out about English mail days. We have to post on Thursdays & Sundays, but I don't know why twice a week. I only know of one regular English mail from **Shanghai**. I did some Chinese her & then Manifold came in & says I'm much better. He also remarked on looking at your photo, “By Jove, that's an awfully good photo of

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41 **Sir Ernest Mason Satow** GCMG PC; 30 June 1843 – 26 August 1929), was a British scholar, diplomat and Japanologist, born to an ethnically German father and an English mother. Satow served as the British High Commissioner (Sept. 1900 – Jan. 1902) and then Minister in Peking from 1900-1906. He was active as plenipotentiary in the negotiations to conclude the Boxer Protocol which settled the compensation claims of the Powers after the Boxer Rebellion, and he signed the protocol for Britain on 7 September 1901.

Mrs Ryder.” He's made the remark once if not twice before, but he has a very bad memory, perhaps he's forgotten your picture of yourself! I'm very hopeful just now about getting away in the spring. How lovely it will be to see your dear pretty face again.

“5<sup>th</sup> Jan. Thank you I'm quite all right again. I'm going to try sending you off two letters this week, as you may like to know I'm quite well again. The exchange the bank here gives is very erratic. It has gone bad this month so I am sending my money down to **Shanghai** to be sent from there, and as I am sending Rs600 to India you will get only a small amount probably £35; but I hope to send you a good lot next month. We shall do excellently well if I'm not cut all my travelling allowance. It is so jolly being well again. I can do such a lot of work in the day now. This afternoon I went for a stroll round the bazaar & yesterday about 1½ hours walk round the **Forbidden City**. I'm writing after dinner. I found I wasted all the evening talking, so I'm going to retire to my room now after I have finished my after dinner cheroot. My room is almost too warm tonight. I've taken off my coat. There is one thing I think a great deal about & that is this. You know I had intended doing the year's course in Chinese here, well it would be a great pity to leave here without passing; well everyone says it takes 9 months work to pass the exam, well I shall have done 4 months only; but then I fancy the exam will be easier this year, because no one has worked steadily; so that if I went up & failed & then we were ordered away; whether it would be a sound thing to go & ask Jamieson, who is the examiner, how much longer work I should have to do to pass. If he said only a month; for me to stay on it counts as duty not as leave, in order to have “passed in Chinese” against me, and to collar the Rs1,000. It wouldn't keep us apart any longer, because you would want some little time to prepare for your coming to India & there's not much object in my arriving much before you in India is there? At least I hate life in an Indian station without you more than anything. This, of course, is just only my thoughts & it all depends on when we leave China & when the exam is held. I'm thinking of having another teacher from 5 to 7 in the evening. Rs1,000 means about £60 so you may get something nice out of it, so wish me luck. In the mean time more Chinese means less time for writing to you, but you won't be neglected as you come first. The rate of pay for teachers is \$5 a month for each hour per day. I have mine for 3 hours, so I pay \$15. if I had him another two hours it would be \$25 a month. I told you \$ means dollars, didn't I, and one dollar = Rs1.8.0 or 2 shillings.<sup>42</sup>

“6<sup>th</sup> Jan. I'm sorry, posting time is past, Sunday, so I must send this off on Thursday. No news as usual. I worked at Chinese from 10 to 1, & after lunch went for the usual stroll or at least fast walk because at 4 o'clock there were 10° of frost in the shade, quite cold enough. You don't get less letter by my Chinese, it simply means I hardly write a line except to you & my mother, with one now 7 then to **Una & Mary**. I expect by the time you get this, there will be something quite definite about our coming away. The enclosed letter to Cox will you forward to them; it may be of use should we get sudden orders to go back to India & I telegraphed to you to come out & hadn't time to send you enough money, do you see. I looked at the rules with Renny-Tailyour about our travelling allowance. We certainly are entitled to it, but we have drawing at double rate like in **Yunnan & the Shan hills** & we may get half. I couldn't pay my pay into the bank yesterday as I went after time. Today most of the fellows went off buying things in the curio shops, but although I had a lot of dollars I had to sit tight having a horrid little wife & family who want it all. You darling, you would love these shops, there would be no getting you out of them, much more fascinating than bonnets &c. my money goes off tomorrow & you will get £30 or £35 only, so you won't be able to get any flowers this month & only eat bread & butter. However next month you will get more; you can ~~ction on £90 unless, as I say, my travelling allowance is cut. There are an enormous quantity of crows in Peking, while the siege was going on they all bolted frightened by the firing; we have a lot every night on a tree above our house & two magpies on another tree. We all watched today two crows came onto the magpies' tree, drove the magpies away from their nest & proceeded to deliberately pull it to pieces. The poor magpies were so angry but were afraid to do more than use very strong language. When the nest was half destroyed the two crows flew away, one magpie went after them, the other flew straight to the nest & worked away

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42 i.e. 10 dollars to the pound.

hard to mend it.

“About 10 o'clock. I burn the midnight candle a bit now, find I can do such a lot of work in the evening. I'm going to post this tomorrow after all. How I wish you were here; I feel I've such a lot to talk to you about, I shan't know where to begin when we do meet. You seem to have missed some of my letters. Renny-Tailyour has a good tip, in the field season he numbers his letters to his sister, so if she gets No. 4 & 6 she knows 5 is missing. I hope for another letter from you soon. I wonder if you really know how I look forward to your letters, darling & how much I enjoy the loving bits. I often go over the ending carefully to see if I can't find a little bit of extra love somewhere. I've had to knock off beer & port wine, only allowed whiskey. I'm sorry to give up port wine. I should much sooner meet in England. I love being at the **Windsor Hotel** with you. If you want telegraphed to me, at any time, go & ask at the telegraph office for the rules about telegraphing to the China Field Force. It is half the usual price, and you can stick all the address into one word I think. Ryder is quite enough with “Peking”. I should think Renny-Tailyour wants to go on leave as soon as this expedition is over, so in that case I couldn't come home at once. I should have to see to the fair mapping, especially as he saw to my **Yunnan** mapping two years ago. But you darling you may bet your bottom dollar I'll do my level best to come home or to meet you some way or another as soon as I can. If you are to come out, don't let people put you off, by talking about it's being hot in the **Red Sea**. My very fondest love dearest & lots of the very most embarrassing kisses you can imagine! For ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

“Kisses to my 3 dear daughters. Tell Margaret & Enid about the magpies.”

8<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Letters belonging to the new mail re beginning to arrive, so I hope to get some letters from you in a day or two, as two mails are close together. I really feel quite well again. It is past 11 at night but I must set to on my letter to you a bit. We had a conjurer in for a couple of hours this evening. He did some wonderful things in the way of producing huge bowls of water from under cloths &c. I also took a walk down to the Temple of Heaven with Rigby. Peace negotiations are still going on. I don't know how long they will take. If it wasn't that I wanted to get back to you, I'd sooner serve here than in a station in India by a long way. I think the good Chinese houses are so nice. We have all our rooms round a courtyard. I expect you would learn Chinese quicker than I can, as you can mime so well. Your dear photo always sits on my table in front of me. I have no frame, none to be got. I have quite shut up buying curios now, I want to save money for you to come out & to set up house, also for the Chatham course. I have begun repacking my boxes, so that the things won't break & can start at a moment's notice, but we shall get plenty of notice, as they will have to get the transports to **Taku** before we can get away. We have just heard of the Boers invading Cape Colony, the fighting there seems never to end. It is unfortunate for us, as of course China goes unnoticed & the honours at the end of the campaign will be few, they will have so many for South Africa & quite right too.

“9<sup>th</sup> Jan. One day is exactly like another one. Looking forward to a mail soon, some fellows have got theirs.

“11<sup>th</sup> (10<sup>th</sup>?) Jan. The usual silly thing is going on with our mail, it ought to have arrived several days ago, this sort of unsettles me, because I think to myself, it's sure to come tomorrow & I'll write then. Owing I suppose to each day being like the other the slips by pretty quick. Just now I'm not so hopeful about getting away; there is a hitch in the peace negotiations, but Dr. Morrison told me it would be signed in two days, that is you know only the preliminary agreement; so you look out in your paper for peace negotiations. Should they break down & a spring campaign come on, it is more likely I should go down **Shanghai** way. Yesterday out of (*sic*) my walk I had to pull down my ear flaps, I have a fur cap, it was so cold. I seem to be quite well again now, rather the other way on just now.

“11<sup>th</sup> Jan. No mail! I'm not going out this afternoon as I have several letters to write & I want to have a good work at Chinese, learning Chinese by heart. So I begin by writing a little to you, but if you can't persuade the post to send along the letters a bit quicker I haven't much to write about. I've just had a

new khaki serge coat made which fits nicely. I'm feeling very well & love you more & more dearly. I was talking to Renny-Tailyour about parties<sup>43</sup>, I think he has had enough of Burma, but anyhow he will stick to 11 Party in the southern **Shan** hills if he does remain in Burma, but I can get 21 Party in the northern **Shan** hills if I like. He said you could certainly go there, especially now the railway is being built up towards **Kunlong**. How I should love to have you in camp with me, darling. I would do all in my power to make you comfortable & keep you well. This always supposes you don't have any more babies. If you insist on having more as I'm afraid you may, you can't come out into that sort of camping with me.

“Jan. 12. Still no signs of a mail, our last is Nov. 9 & the legations who get their mail up by the Chinese post office got theirs up to Nov. 23 a week ago. When I knew that I couldn't possibly get your letters for months I sort of got accustomed to it, but now I worry around like anything. Why India would seem quite near to you. I went & had a read in the papers at the legation this afternoon. Manifold is very keen to go off on another exploring trip, but not I. I want to get home to you & besides no one but a d~d fool would think of going into the interior of China now; so you needn't imagine for one moment that I will unless of course they have a spring campaign, then I go naturally with the army. If Renny-Tailyour hadn't come, I very likely would have got something out of the campaign, now I don't see how I possibly could. I mean I don't think I deserve anything. I have nothing to do now, that is why I'm glad I took up Chinese, just to occupy me. How I should love to have you here & then go home via Japan & Canada. I'd enjoy anything as long as you were with me. Darling, don't believe for one moment that I don't long for you; you seem to shove along very well without me, but I feel so miserable at times for the longing to be with you. I think I've made up my mind now, No. 21 Party in the **northern Shan hills** if you don't want any more babies. If you want them, No 19 Party in **Bangalore** would suit better. I shall not get any increase of pay for about nine years, Ida, so we must really save as much as we can; even if we never have a son, we must do our three daughters well & they will want something for dresses &c. Manifold said today, don't forget when you write to Mrs. Ryder to remember me to her. He is really a very nice chap indeed; for one thing he is most gentlemanly. How you could have disliked him & played about with a chap like Ronaldson beats me. Manifold is also working at Chinese, but he is worse than I am, he has a very bad memory. Another book I wrote to Shanghai for is out of print, “Chinese Without a Teacher.” I'm sorry, Wade is too learned a book, he doesn't give nice ordinary sentences.

“Jan. 13. Now everyone is grouching bout the mail & I'm afraid I've missed a week waiting for it, but I'll send this off tomorrow anyhow. Darling do write my (*sic*) long loving letters, I'm feeling rather down in the dumps about when we shall meet, but yet the news about peace negotiations is pretty good. The general opinion is that one brigade will remain for some little time, but that the bulk of the force will leave in March. Renny-Tailyour wants to go on leave as soon as he gets back, which means that I shall probably not be able to get leave, so you will have to come out to me, but then we shall be able to use the 3 months leave later on. What I should really like would be to get leave to stop on here to go on with Chinese & you come out here to join me & then we'd go home via Japan, but that I know won't come off. I've got some **Bangalore** news Renny-Tailyour heard from Mrs Fenton. Major Goodnyes (?) has gone off his head & had to go home under restraint. Captain Roe R.E. Has married one of the white mice. Col. Suene Grant has gone home on leave. I see Chancellor has passed into the Staff College, which is good for him. Also I saw a list of Militia candidates who had passed into the Regulars, but no **Harry**<sup>44</sup> among them.

“January 13. Now I'm happy with your two letters of Nov. 16 & 23. You had scarcely received any letters, but everyone here is receiving the same complaints. I wrote very often darling & lots of my letters must have gone astray if they haven't turned up. Your second letter was consequently rather

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<sup>43</sup> Exploration, not social parties!

<sup>44</sup> Younger brother to Ida. 'Harry' was Captain 1/3rd Battalion. Gurkha Rifles. Attached to 2/3rd Gurkha Rifles Killed in action at Festubert on the 16th May 1915. Buried in St.Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoué, France. Medal Entitlement: 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

short, rather rough on me. You seem to be having a jolly time in **London**. I wish we could go to some theatres together, with you quite well. You say I never mention coming home, but by Jove I'm thinking of it all day & it's the topic of conversation with us all, or at any rate when we shall leave China. I'm afraid the shops in **London** must be a bit tempting, same like the shops here. We also have chestnuts, good but small, also plenty of fruit, in fact our food is most excellent. Yes I saw about the Coromandel gold mines had gone, so I wrote to Cox & told them to pay up the £2 or so & keep my 10 shares on. I don't know what part of **Kensington** you are in; are you near Gloucester Road Station? How I should love a long talk with you, you dear, to say nothing of a kiss & still less of anything more! Politely dear, you always have been an ass about photographs. You go & get photoed or the children at a place where you can't be done again. If they are not a success, in the mean time you don't send me any! If you go on telling me every letter you are not going to have another baby, I shall begin to think that you do want more & that is why you are so anxious for me to come home! My poor little dog. I told you he was stolen. "Boxer" was his name & I think some Tommies of the Welsh Fusiliers stole him. Gwynne is sure to get a D.S.O. Or brevet, as he was twice mentioned in despatches. We've had to wait so long for letters that yet another mail ought to be here soon. You have shut up sending me the "Standards" you naughty girl. You evidently don't love me any longer, but I love you, every time I get into my sleeping bag if at no other time! I never have cold feet or anything like that now. I got two letters from mother & **Una**. No particular news, & no other letters except officials. My watch won't go now, so I don't know the time, but I sit up in my room after everyone else has gone to bed. I wonder if you still like going to bed early. I've taken to sitting up till 11 o'clock, but then I have nothing now a days to attract me to bed. Life is getting monotonous here, but in another two months something will happen. If it wasn't for wanting you I should prefer Peking to India. It is so jolly cold here, freezing in the shade all day & we've all got such nice complexions when we come in from a walk. It is windy tonight then that raises the dust & Peking dust is awful. I'm going to treat myself to a little Champagne in a day or two if I keep fit. I wonder if you picture to yourself our meeting, probably in Bombay, & it will be beastly hot, it always is there. I shall have to get a new suit for the purpose. I must write to **Harry & Chucky** soon. Your mother hasn't written to me for a year, except one letter & I'm not quite certain about that. I rather despair of making much progress with Chinese, I feel it's beyond me a bit, now if you were only here to encourage me, but then I should be wanting to make love to you instead.

"Jan. 16. Now I'm writing in the early morning. I have a big bunch of grapes for chota hazri & enjoy them, but this has got to be sent off, so very fondest love, my pet, kisses all over your pretty mouth, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

"kiss my babies for me."

13<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, No news (*in*) particular. We first heard that the preliminary peace agreement had been signed by the Chinese, but there was a hitch for some days. Now however everyone says it has been signed & possibly the rest of the negotiations will be transferred to America or Europe. Then the bulk of the forces will be withdrawn in the spring, including I hope myself & a brigade will remain till the final peace is signed. In the meantime we have been grumbling at our post. The legations who get theirs through the Chinese post got mails up to Nov. 23, a week ago, but our last are of Nov. 9. it has been getting very cold, 29° of frost the coldest at night, but the maximum in the day is always now below freezing point. I know I've been very glad of the flaps of my fur cap. I've been very well the last few days after being seedy for some days, and am getting on a bit with my Chinese, 3 hours every morning from 10 to 1, a walk between lunch & tea, & work between tea & dinner makes up my day. We have been laughing over the pictures of the relief of Peking, most awfully & hopelessly unlike anything approaching the truth. All our stoves have kettles with boiling water on them, the steam is supposed to do away with headaches, due to the dryness of the atmosphere. I've found out one of the Grimstones is here in the cavalry brigade. I saw Lestock Reid the other day, he is Deputy Judge Advocate General.

"Jan. 16. Yesterday two mails came in from you of Nov. 16 & 23, with some 'Times' for which many thanks. Nothing very special had been happening with you, nor with us either. If I had skates, I could

get some skating out at the Summer Palace. In Peking there is too much dust which makes the ice rough. I can quite imagine it takes a year to learn even a little Chinese, so few of our commonest sentences can be translated straight into Chinese. Our food here is very good. We get good meat, besides pheasants, partridges & wild duck; fruit especially grapes which are very good black ones, sweet & big. Our Chinese cook is good & I can't say we are roughing it a bit. I should like to be out on the march again. Exploring in the interior of China will not be good enough now for several years; but it is truly a fascinating occupation wandering in the unknown. My room is close to the kitchen, it is so funny to hear our servants teaching the Chinese cook English, they are all great friends & very polite, with any amount of jokes together. The weather has turned quite warm the last few days. Much love to you all & many thanks for letters, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“Your mittens have become very useful.”

14<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: “My own sweet valentine<sup>45</sup>, How are you getting on. I haven't made good progress this week with my letter as today is Thursday. We have been having a regular go of windy weather, very cold again & the dust, my dear, you would be dusting tables &c. all day. Out in the streets you get your eyes full of dust & it gets everywhere. The usual number of shaves (?) are about, but the general idea seems that we shall not get away so very soon. Here we are half way though ~~May~~ February (*strange*) & not a sign of our leaving. The next two mails from England are on one steamer. The French mail broke down somewhere & the English mail of a week later caught it up & brought on the mails from Singapore. I bought 10 China bowls today for \$3 each, green & red dragons about the size of rather large finger bowls. Now I've no money left, so I must wait till the beginning of next month. I'm gradually repacking my boxes very carefully, so I hope many things will not get spoilt. I had such bad luck with your photo; the chimney from my stove passes over my table & a great blob of black liquid fell from it just in front of your photo, burst like a little shell & covered you all over with black spots. I'm going to take it over to the photo sergeant to see whether anything can be done. Rigby goes down to Shanghai as soon as the river opens to inspect signalling & will bring us up some stores if we don't hear that we are going soon. One can buy plenty of stores & liquor here but at about double the price. I'm very curious to see (between ourselves) what **Wiffs** will do when he goes home, if he gets his 3 months leave. I met Rose of his regiment yesterday & he said he never saw anyone so much in love as **Wiffs** was with the young lady we heard of, and they were all certain they would be engaged!<sup>46</sup> My hands are rather cold for writing; I expect the spring here will be very fine, but oh! this would be such lovely cuddling weather. It is much colder than England.

“Feb (*sic*). 17. Now this has to go off today. I've been waiting, hoping for letters, but no luck, however they will come in handy for next mail. No news, absolutely none. Everyone is tired of starting reports & I am longing for you so much my pet, getting very weary of waiting as there is any chance of any more expeditions. The French are very anxious to move on into the next province **Shansi**. If they do it will effectually dish all prospects of peace.

“11 o'clock. Morrison the Times correspondent came over after dinner & so we sat talking as he always has lots of news. He says the Chinese won't agree to the execution of the officials, so the Germans & French are very keen on advancing early in March. Anyhow things look very black for getting away & you see, you dear, what scores (?) me off is that I'm not head of the Survey & if any British Force goes Renny-Tailyour will go & I shall stay behind; but I only want one thing now & that is to go home to you. My darling pet, although I've been so long away don't love me any the less. Write me good long loving letters (although this is a short one). God bless you, my own darling, heaps & heaps of love & kisses. Forever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

16<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Let me see, just now, peace negotiations are not getting on very well owing to its having leaked out that the Russians have made a secret treaty by themselves with China on the quiet, probably in a few days things will go better. Of course all sorts of

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<sup>45</sup> It being exactly a month before.

<sup>46</sup> His brother Wilfred married Tempé Parsons on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1901.

shaves go about. This morning I was told quite seriously that our transports have been ordered, but that I know isn't true; but you will get this about six weeks hence & will see the news in the papers. Any signs of the bulk of our force going away will (*be*) sure to be in the home papers before we know it here & if the bulk go, that is General Gaselee & headquarters, I shall almost certainly be one of them. We have Captn. Johnstone of the 1<sup>st</sup> Madras Pioneers staying in the mess up from **Tientsin** for a few days. Tomorrow I'm lunching at the R.E. Mess. One packet of Standards arrived from Nov. 2 – 8, a fortnight later than your letter, did you send them? The address was hand printed not written with running hand so I think not. If **Blanche** sent them, please thank her; if you sent them here's a good hug for you & you're a darling; and your packet of two pipes & some baccy came too, thanks so much you dear. The bigger pipe is very nice, the small one is very small, it lies alongside the one the Belgian Bishop gave me, a huge one. Like the sort Kruger smokes. Here' two kisses, one for each pipe & ½ for the baccy. I want your photo, it may surprise you to know that I want the photo of **Violet** because you are in it. You have never told whether her hair has got redder. They are none of them so pretty as their mother, but still she is young & may have another half dozen yet. Lord Roberts' grandfather had 23 by his first wife and 15 by his second! Those are the people who made England the great country it is.

“17<sup>th</sup>. Jan. There is a lovely monotony about one's life here, each day exactly the same & no news, this is not good for letter writing, Chinese all the morning, lunched with the R.E.'s, then went for a walk with Renny-Tailyour, & now it's after tea. It was so cold today, but I'm getting nice & warm in my little room. I met Jamieson of the legation today, one generally gets some news out of him. He said that at last today the preliminary peace treaty had been signed. I asked him when he thought we should get away & he said “April”. Anyhow as the river & (?) **Taku** doesn't melt till about March 7 we can't get to India before the hot weather & it will not be a pleasant time for you to come out. I know I shall not get leave at once on return to India because I must look after the mapping. Renny-Tailyour had leave granted him & had taken his passage to England when he was ordered out here & of course I've been on leave a lot lately. You are not very regular in sending me out an account of what you have at Cox's in the money line You can reckon on £90 or perhaps £95 going home next month. Please remember, dearest I'm sending home as much as ever I can for you to save something in hand to come out with; but I'm afraid your being in **London** will be rather expensive. There's the dinner gong.

“Jan. 18. before breakfast. I'm getting very civilized, wax my moustache & use eau de quinine for my hair. I think I shall always use something of the sort, it is so easy to brush the (*b*)air smooth after it. You haven't complained of your hair coming out lately.

“18<sup>th</sup> (19<sup>th</sup>?) Jan. Today I did precisely the same as I did yesterday & I love you just as much as I did yesterday. Perhaps not quite so much because my fire is nearly out & my room is cold. I think my best arrangement is to send off my letter every Sunday, then you will get letters anyhow regularly. I heard today that Count Waldersee was going down to **Tientsin** next month with his staff which looks rather as if he thinks of going home in the spring.

“Jan. 20. Two dear sweet letters of yours, Nov. 30 & Dec. 7, came today. They make me love you more than ever, and will give me plenty of writing next week. My pet, God bless you & let us meet soon. For ever Your adoring husband & lover, Charlie.”

20<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I sent you off a letter today, but I had only just received yours of Nov. 30 & Dec. 7. getting two letters together is a nuisance, because now we shall have to wait probably for a fortnight for another letter. You had received the £250; also I got a letter from Cox saying they had received £100 & £114.19.1. also a letter from Grindlay saying they had sent you £30. Some money but not much was also sent by the Madras Bank, at Bangalore. You had in your second letter received mine ending Oct. 10, but you must have received two if not three, and one official letter I sent to Bangalore has also gone astray. You poor dear, I didn't get the bangle, the man who had it cleared out. I'm not quite well today, after a period of the other thing I've been three times today. Those warm underclothes & the sleeping bag were splendid, you darling, very sweet of you to think of sending them. You seem so happy in **London** that you evidently don't want me. If I wire you

to come out to India, don't wire back that the Red Sea is too hot. The newspaper was wrong about Watts Jones being tortured for four days, that turned out to be a Belgian Bishop. Watts Jones was killed in a ¼ of an hour. My dear old girl, don't think that I take it lightly. I think we had a most providential escape, but you don't imagine I'm going to write & frighten you with harrowing accounts of the dangers I've been in. I heard also from **Father & Blanche. Harry** failed by only 7 places which is bad luck., I hope he will have better luck next time. Your letters were written on horrid little paper, two sheets hardly equal to one of this. You tell me so little about the children, sweetheart, **Violet** must be funny things & I don't even know the sound of her voice or know her if I met her in the street. I lunched with Dr. Morrison today; he thinks we shall get away in April. Jamieson thinks that the Emperor has actually started back from **Si-an-fu** but I don't believe it; but I must say everything looks as though we should get away in the spring all right. It is so lovely to think of, fancy if we really are going to meet soon. Now, you dear, you must settle about where you will leave the children. Father said that when everything is settled up they will have about £800 a year from Uncle **William's**<sup>47</sup> money. My mother is rather disturbed because a home for poor consumptives, a very big sort of hospital is to be built between **Winsley**<sup>48</sup> & the station, including apparently a quarry & wood & she was written to & asked whether she wanted to sell. She said no, but wrote to ask me. Of course I can but say no, as long as she is alive. You may say what you like but I think you will love me just a little bit more when I have my medal.

“Jan. 21. We have just heard the bad news that the poor old Queen is not expected to live. I suppose this war at the Cape has broken her down. Today I got a letter from the Madras Bank, Bangalore saying that they had sent home £17.8s.9d. So now all the money I sent has gone all right.

“Jan. 22. I'm afraid it is all over with the poor old Queen. Everyone here feels quite sad. Steel, the General's A.D.C. told me today that they had a discussion as to when we would leave here, during lunch. General Gaselee said he thought June. General Barrow said well all the other nations think March. So you see my dear we don't know anything. Anyhow it look as if we should land in India bang in the middle of the hot weather, beastly for everybody, and for you if you come out. I'm feeling fairly fit now, thanks, don't sleep very well, so I sit up, and you get the benefit. I think so much, dearest, about when we shall leave here. Sweetheart darling, I know it will be a wrench leaving the children, but I do so long for you dearest, & we shall be home again early next year. Of course if it was for anybody but you & I, I should say that it wasn't worth your while coming out, but it is, it most certainly is, we have been so much separated. When you get a telegram from me, there is no need to take you passage till the last moment. The ships will all be very empty. Take a berth on the port side, because that is the shady side from **Aden** to **Bombay**. Now about things you bring out, bring as little as possible. I have such a lot of things we can ornament our house without anything from England. You should bring out the house linen. I can't remember whether the dinner service is in **Bangalore** or in England, I think in Bangalore. We shall be so short a time out, and want to save a bit for **Chatham** that I think we need to do very little entertaining. For clothes, sweetheart, don't bring out a lot of old clothes that you won't wear, except one or two if we go into camp. Send out your big house boxes as cargo, addressed to Grindlay a fortnight before you leave if you can, you will save several pounds that way. In one of my letters which must have gone astray I told you I especially wanted you to buy yourself a bike & bring it out with you. What has happened to mine if the boys use it, they may as well keep it & I will buy another one in India. Bring out a set of golf sticks & a bag for yourself, mind the driver should be short for you. I shall not want anything brought out for me, I only want you. As you like the sea, you had better go round & not via **Marseilles**, unless you very much want to, the latter is difficult without a man to help. Store spare baggage with Whiteley. Have your name printed on all your boxes. Don't forget your keys & behave yourself on board ship. If I were on board I should d~d well sea you did (*not*) speak to a single ship's officer, who are very rarely gentlemen. You have been so long at home that you mayn't quite realise that you will want your thin underclothing, you have lots somewhere, and you must have

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47 See page 5 above.

48 Bradford-on-Avon.

some pretty, especially for our meeting, as we shall not leave Bombay the day you arrive! I'm a little worried that you mayn't have enough money. The most you want ot bring with you is £10 in gold, not notes. I should bring 7 sovereigns, 4 ½ sovereigns & about £1 in silver. You are not to go ashore at Port Said if you are the only lady in the party, mind that. You see old Charlie is beginning to assert himself. You my bring **Blanche** if you like, I don't suppose she will be allowed for one moment to come & you must explain that you & I come home again early in 1902. When I leave here I shall almost certainly go in a transport to **Calcutta** & thence by rail to **Bangalore**. By the bye mention when you take your steamer ticket that you are going to Bangalore, they used to give rail fare free, but I was told they don't now. Now it is very late, near 12 o'clock, so I must write about the children tomorrow.

“Jan. 25. I received rather a shock by a letter from the Madras Bank saying that I had exactly Rs1,000 less than I expected there & then I found out that £70 that Renny-Tailyour told them to send home last June was additional to the £350 they sent afterwards. I thought it had been included in that, as I had depended on that Rs1,000 to square up my accounts with the Survey. You will not get so much this month as I expected as I shall have to send Rs700 to square up from here. It is unlucky just now, as I would send you home as much as possible, and I also wanted to do a little buying here. If you have invested that money I told you to, and you get my telegram suddenly telling you to come out, you will have to sell out again, but don't do this till it's necessary. No news about the peace negotiations the last few days. Everyone is talking about the poor old Queen & hoping the S. African war will end soon. I'm feeling very well, now, darling, but I do so long for you.

26<sup>th</sup> Jan. Tomorrow is Sunday, so this must be finished off today. Enclosed is a letter for my **Aunt Mary** which read. You dear, it is so difficult to advise about the children. I have also written to **Mowbray**<sup>49</sup> to ask him whether he approved of aunt **Mary** having the children. I expect he won't, but anyhow the best thing you can do is to try for an alternative place. Remember we shall be back in England next January, so it will not be for long. Darling I wish I could be with you to help arrange. Send my letter on to Aunt **Mary**, tell her I've written to **Mowbray** & that you want to know whether she still sticks to her offer if you go out to me. Really, you know, Ida, your people could easily have the children, their new house must be bigger. They are much better off now the boys<sup>50</sup> will hardly ever be at home. What I want you to do is to arrange beforehand. You should start about a month after you receive my telegram, in fact you will have more notice than that, but I will wire later on about when you should leave England, because we shall hear quite month before we start & it will take us a month to get to India. As soon as you get my telegram commence addressing to Grindlay, Bombay, but don't forget to write then & tell them I wish my letters kept till I send them instructions. I shall probably wire two or three times, first when I know we are leaving, then when I know the exact date & the date we expect to reach **Calcutta**. You might arrange to arrive about a fortnight after I do. The latest news is that th Chinese Court have left **Hsi-an-fu** and are going to **Kai-feng-fu**, the capital of **Honan**. What this means nobody knows. In the meantime peace negotiations are not getting on very well; but the general idea is that this will not prevent the bulk of the allied forces leaving China in the spring. The river off **Taku** generally opens about 7<sup>th</sup> March, but of course it takes transports some time to collect, so that I don't expect any of us would start before the end of March. Darling I wish I could come home to fetch you. I should love to see the children again & a voyage with you would be delightful. I wish one didn't have such a lot of decisions to make. I hate the idea of your coming out in the hot weather & would do anything I could to dodge it, but I don't see any way. It would take months to get my 3 months leave sanctioned and that sort of special leave, the order saying it will be given doesn't come out for 2 or 3 months after the show is over, and ordinary privilege leave I only have month due to me. Besides all that I can't go as Renny-Tailyour wants to. I've been writing all this letter as if I was certain to get away from China in the spring, no one knows, I pray for it. To be united once more with my sweetheart is what I long for. Of course if I don't get away, well, that means still longer separation, but I really think there is not much chance of my being kept here beyond the end of March. What I

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49 Mowbray Thomson husband to Mary his mother Julia's sister.

50 Ida's younger brothers Harry & Tommy.

also think of a great deal too is your having all the bother about settling the children, the sadness of leaving them, the journey by yourself in the heat. Oh! dear, oh! dear. I can do so little to help. If you come, darling, I will do all in my power to make you comfortable & happy & take every care of you I can. I've had to wipe away a silly old tear that turned up just then. About the time you get this will be a likely sort of time to get a telegram from me. We shall go via **Hong Kong, Singapore** to **Calcutta**. My very fondest love, my pet. God bless you. Heaps & heaps of kisses, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

25<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, Everyone here feels sad over the dear old Queen's death; it is a great blow to England; and the news from South Africa is not good either. There are no signs of our leaving **Peking** yet a while. We shall get plenty of notice as transports have to be ordered, mostly from India. In the mean while the days go by one much like another. I do my Chinese from 10 to 1. I don't feel as if I were making much progress, it is difficult to work at it, when one is constantly disturbed with questions about maps &c. After lunch I do about an hour with maps & then go for a walk, sometimes just for exercise, at other times into the bazaar streets to see the curios for sale; but it is rather like strolling Bond Street with 6d in your pocket. After tea & after dinner I start at work again & it is difficult to find time for writing home letters. We have just heard that the Chinese Court have left **Hsian-fu** & gone eastwards to **Kai-feng-fu**, the capital of **Honan**; what the reason of this or the result no one quite agrees, but they doubtless wanted to get further away from **Kansu** & the rebellious Mahomedans & also from **Tung-fu-hsiang**<sup>51</sup>, who is a great blackguard & has much local power. We generally seem to get two mails once a fortnight. I think I have got every one of your letters, but a good many of ours from **Peking** have disappeared. I think Count Waldersee & his staff will go down to **Tientsin** next month to clear out the palace which they are occupying. The French & Americans are not under him. I wonder whether **Wiffs** will have got his leave. Colonel Powell said he did not think he would get long leave. Colonel Powell gets command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, I think next September. He got his own appointment here owing to his having passed in Chinese. The consumptive hospital is a very fine idea, only I wish it was to be anywhere but where it will be<sup>52</sup>. Judging from the article in *Bladud*<sup>53</sup> the grounds will include the quarry wood, which we've always sort of look(ed) on as half ours, at any rate a sort of no man's land. I certainly don't want to sell **Murhill**, only I see it will gradually get less in the country. There will have to be several houses built for doctors & so on & that means more houses & shops in the village; then you will have to come along with me to a Tibetan plateau to breathe really pure air. I've just had a new khaki serge coat made which I was much in want of. I hope we don't dawdle on here much longer, either a spring campaign or back to India. I want to look after all my Yunnan Surveys. But we shall probably land back in India & it will be **Calcutta** bang in the middle of the hot weather. I've been very well again of late but still feel as if I wanted a quiet rest somewhere. Our journey back from **Thibet** was very rough & so was the march up here. It is now know(n) that it was after a great deal of hesitation that the viceroy of **Ssüchuan** (Szechuan) decided not to obey the Empress Dowager's orders to massacre all foreigners. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

28<sup>th</sup> January, Peking, to Ida: "My own very darling sweetheart, This has been a dreadfully long separation<sup>54</sup>, dearest, I am wearying for you. Phillipps of the headquarters staff told me today that they had received no orders or intimation yet of our going away, except that they were asked by telegram if

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51 General Tung-fu-hsiang was extremely anti-foreign, and gave full support to Empress Cixi and the Boxers. General Tung (or Dong) committed his Muslim troops to join the Boxers to attack the 8 nation alliance. They were put into the rear division, and attacked the legations relentlessly. These Kansu (or Gansu) braves were dubbed as the "10,000 Islamic rabble" by westerners. They were also known for their intolerance towards the Opium trade. A Japanese chancellor, Sugiyama Akira, and several Westerners were shot to death by the Muslim braves. It was reported that the Muslim troops were going to wipe out the foreigners to return a golden age for China, and the Muslims repeatedly attacked foreign churches, railways, and legations, before hostilities even started. The Muslim troops were armed with modern repeater rifles and artillery, and reportedly enthusiastic about going on the offensive and killing foreigners.

52 See above, page 38.

53 After the legend of King Bladud of Bath.

54 Since October 1899.

there were enough cavalry remounts to last till the end of March & another said, "If the force is withdrawn in the spring, could arrangements be made for buying or brining over mules from China to India;" which both shew the question of withdrawing the force is being thought of. Phillipps also said that it would take nearly three months from the day it was decided to withdraw us before we got back to India, which is quite true, because the voyage alone takes 3 weeks. Moving down from here would take some days, & of course the transports have to be hired, fitted up & sent out here first; so that if I hear, which is probable as soon as orders are out & then wire home to you, you will have quite two months before you need start, plenty of time to get everything all settled & fit yourself out comfortably. What I'm afraid might happen would be our departure being delayed so much that it would be hardly worth your while coming out, knowing that I could get away next January. I think of all these things so much, darling, & then when I think of you coming out in the hot weather, I almost think I ought to say to you don't come out, but how I should hate a season in **Bangalore** without you. Capt. Gordon of the Survey is married to the daughter of a missionary at Poona! & wonderful to say Major Longe got engaged, but it was broken off. Bythell of the Survey is also engaged which I am sorry for, because now he will probably stick to the Survey & I always thought he might very likely revert home. One or two fellows retiring would make a great difference to us. There are 9 in my grade of Deputy Superintendent 1<sup>st</sup> grade, & I am No. 9, only just having got into it. One man, a civilian Mr Scott, goes this July, this will make me No. 8. Then nobody retires till Col. Gore goes in 1904 & Col. Hobday in 1905, that would make me No. 6. Then nobody goes till 1910. Do you see? so if three more fellows could be persuaded to retire between now & 1905, & it would make me 3<sup>rd</sup> & I should then be probably officiating & that means Rs300 a month extra & if nobody retires I have to wait five years. Colonel Whahab is said to be likely to retire before his time. I wish this Chatham course wasn't coming off for several years. I should like to have say three years quiet time with you in India, no more babies, so that you could come over to the Shan hills with me. You dear, how I should love that, but anywhere with you would be lovely. There is going to be a big funeral parade on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. for the Queen. It is very unlucky that this China business should have come on just when the Cape War is on, they will give so many honours for that, they will give fewer than usual for the China War.

"Jan. 30. No news about peace negotiations. It is getting very monotonous, very. Oh! how I long for you, darling. However the very general opinion is that we get away in the spring all right, at any rate I count on it & shall be awfully disappointed if we don't. It has been unlucky that my going on service should have been straight on top of my travels without an interval with you. I'm so anxious to get the photos, dearest, but I don't know when they will come. I've been packing up a box, mostly silk & embroideries. I'm so longing for you to see my things; and then there were a certain number of things I bought last year from Yunnan that were too heavy to take home which you have never seen mostly bronzes. I always writ to you late at night, finished my work & I've found I don't go to sleep quickly, I want you to cuddle up to. I always bless you for that sleeping bag, I shall always use camping whenever it's cold; there is room for you too! You can imagine that I have a good lot of things, when I tell that I have 9 if not 10 good size boxes full. I wish we were going to settle down somewhere for five years. You darling, I wonder if you still love me, I should so love a kiss. Do be sweet & loving to me when we meet & all the time we are together. My table is so untidy, it wants you badly to tidy it up so that I can't find anything afterwards. I want so much to know what lessons **Margaret** does, can she read yet? She ought to be able to soon surely.

"I've discovered a new packet of notepaper. We ought to get a mail in a couple of days or so. It is such a delight to me when I get your letters. I wish I could help you about coming out, what to get & all that sort of thing. The only thing that I can think of to say is to remember that if you come it will only be for about 8 months or so & to bring out as little as possible. I should leave one big box of house things behind. Wherever you leave the children, see them settled a few days before you leave or you will never get your packing done. Except for a few cold snaps the worst of the winter is over by now, and it really hasn't been anything very much. I shall have very likely a month or so of out door work before we go away, very likely up at **Shan-hai-kuan** to do some triangulation but I would sooner stay still & work at Chinese. Anyhow I shall pass what is called the preliminary which enables me to come (with you) here

for a year's duty to study Chinese whenever I like if I can get permission.

"Feb. 1. My dear, it is such a windy day. I'm not going out, except just for a very short walk perhaps. I drew my pay today as I wanted to send you money home as soon as possible. It is unlucky that I have to send Rs700 to Calcutta to square my account there, but I think the Bank at Shanghai will send you £60, perhaps £65 if the exchange is good. So far no reference or objection has been made to our drawing travelling allowance, but I'm quite certain they will object, except that I don't see any other thing that I have to deduct for. I've advanced sufficient to the mess to have no mess bills for two months, and I want just a few dollars to spend on trifles here. Tomorrow is the funeral parade for the Queen. Not having blue uniform I'm all right. It will probably be windier than today.

"Feb. 2. Delightful, a mail came in today, with two letters from you of Dec. 14 & 21. I'm so happy, but it is a pity getting two together because then I have to wait a fortnight for more. You had had **Blanche** with you, so you were quite happy, didn't miss me a bit & wrote on thick small paper, but you're a darling all the same. I'm so disappointed that you won't have your miniature painted for me, you might have sweetheart, when I am away from you I want photos & pictures of you, when we're together I prefer looking at your own pretty face & that is the time you always were surprised that I didn't want photos of you. In both your letters, darling, you ask me to come home & fetch you. There's nothing I would like better, but alas! What can I do! I don't see any possible way by which it can be managed, so I'm afraid you must come out to me. I do long to see the children so much, my pet; I don't feel half so sorry for you as I do for myself. It has been so cold the last few days & I'm very nosey; it makes me neglect my duties, I've been very slack at Chinese & writing letters. My mother says of the children, "They are all three pretty & very dear children & much improved." I can see signs beginning of preparations being made for our going away. Oh! how I shall love going nearer to (*you*). You were quite right about the Coromandel shares, here is the paper signed, send it to Cox. You are getting quite businesslike. Do you remember the time when you couldn't write a cheque. I wish I had got you some pearls, but Gwynne nearly got into a great row, it was only by telling a lot of lies that he didn't, but don't go repeating this. Now darling I must go to bed. Fondest love you pet & heaps of kisses to your dear self & the children, ever your adoring husband & lover, Charlie."

3<sup>rd</sup> February, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest Mother, Many thanks for your letters of Dec. 14 & 21. It seems quite a regular thing to get two mails together, this is owing to the English & French steamers bringing alternate mails & the English generally catches up the French as the latter goes round by **Saigon**. Tanks so much for telling me about the children. You know how much one longs to hear every little detail about one's children when separated from them. There was a big funeral parade yesterday for the Queen to which I couldn't go, not having full dress, all the nations sent detachments. I haven't heard a word reliable about peace negotiations this week, but there are various indirect signs that we shall leave about April. Three months leave will probably be granted special for this expedition, but I shall not be able to take it at once, as I know Major Renny-Tailyour wishes to go home as soon as possible. He had taken his passage & his leave was granted before he was ordered here, and one of us must stay in India to complete the maps, besides I have a lot of work from Yunnan explorations to do; but I shall take my three months just before the Chatham course, and as that begins on April 1. 1902 I should leave India on Jan. 1. 1902. It was a great pity for me that the Chatham course was not held this year as arranged at first, because the expedition is practically over now & they are giving men leave or sending them to appointments in India. I should very much like to have gone up to **Kuéhua-chêng** where Watts Jones was killed & have the wiping out of the palace. His brother is still there, but nothing will be done. Everyone is anxious to settle up affairs & our Government are only too anxious as long as this South African war is still on. Colonel Powell had a letter from **Wilfred** from India 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. which he sent me down to read. I wonder whether he has got leave. I hope you will manage to keep the consumptive hospital a fair distance off. I understand they want to build in Naboth's vineyard.<sup>55</sup> I am writing this alternatively with Chinese, while the Chinese dries I write this. I went for a walk along the wall today, about 6 miles, it is so jolly up there. The whole length of wall is about 25 miles long. It's 40

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<sup>55</sup> See the Bible 1 Kings 21.

to 50 feet high & about 40 feet wide, so you can imagine it took some work to build. We passed the new German cemetery. They have 75 graves there already, and altogether they must have lost an enormous quantity of men, mostly from enteric. Yes, I got your parcel, all the things are A. 1. most particularly grateful for the socks & mittens just at present. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

4<sup>th</sup> February, Peking, to Ida: " my code and darling sweetheart, Just burnt the end of my finger a little so I've shut up Chinese & write to you to console myself. What is your news? I'm rather bothered because I've just had a cheque for \$311 I wrote a long time ago because the bank at Shanghai wouldn't cash it. I've written to ask why, but anyhow I have to pay the money here and shall probably get it from Renny-Tailyour as he draws his pay tomorrow and give him a cheque on Cox for about £33; so you must be prepared for that. I'm afraid I told you to invest too soon. I've written to the bank at Shanghai asking what my balance is. The exchange is infinitely more puzzling here than in India, because there are two exchanges, one between silver & gold & the other between dollars & silver & they are always being juggled about; but, as I think I told you, if when you are nearly going to start & haven't enough money, you must sell out the money you invested last. Renny-Tailyour told me today privately that he had saved Rs100,000 while he had been in India, and he always lives very comfortably. While he is in a station he doesn't save much, but in a field season he of course can't spend anything. No news about our moving; and we can't possibly move sooner than six weeks after we get orders so that takes us up to the middle of March. So that if we got orders tomorrow we couldn't be in India before the middle of April. If we dawdle on, we shall really have to consider whether it is worthwhile your coming out, but yes it is, because supposing you came out rather late say July or so, I should then take my three months leave after the course instead of before. In fact when you come to think of it I don't know that it wouldn't be better to do that, whatever time you come out. It would give us time to have 3 months or so in camp in the **Shan** hills; as we would go over early in November & leave again in February. I have had such a lot of cold weather & you've had so long at home, 4½ years now, but I hate the idea of a hot weather in India especially for you, but there is no way of dodging it that I can see. I hope I shall get my middle before the Chatham course as I shall be a lot in uniform there. It is quite possible that an international medal may be given as well as the English; but it will probably take two years before we get us because the mints will have to make the South African ones first & they will have to make about 300,000 of them. I've been having one of my coughs, the sort you love so, the last few days, necessitating a lot of clearing of the throat. Renny-Tailyour & I both have enlarged tonsils & uvula, so we sat down the other day & examined each others. You evidently never got a letter he wrote you in September, at least I hope not as you haven't answered it. Now it is quite time to go to bed.

"5th. Feb. The only little scrap of news today is that a few days ago Count Waldersee sent round to the different generals & asked when they proposed to break up their forces & send them away. Gen. Gaselee said that he had no orders. Although it was 12 before I went to bed last night I lay awake ever so long thinking about your coming out, longing so much for you, darling, but I keep wondering whether you ought to come out in the middle of the hot weather. It has been so difficult to arrange things, they don't seem to happen just luckily. Then I keep bothering over having told you to invest that money and not left you with enough.

"6 o'clock. Renny-Tailyour suggested today, when I was talking to him about setting up house, why not take rooms, and the meals you don't go to the general room but feed with one other married couple. I said, "oh! life in a hotel is beastly." But he said, "Well, lots of people were doing it last year, the Taskers, Fentons, Ramsays of the 4th Hussars & others & they all liked it very much. It will save Mrs Ryder all the trouble of housekeeping, the expenses &c." Renny-Tailyour is a very sensible chap & likes to do things in good style, so his opinion is worth having. This is of course only what I am thinking about, we will see what we'll do when we get to **Bangalore**, got to get their first. Here's a kiss for you.

"Feb. 6. about 11pm. You dear old girlie, how I am longing for you each day that passes, without any news of are going makes me long for you more; but I suppose the Powers won't withdraw any troops until the Chinese have more orders agreed to the Peace Treaty. In the meantime I've got to a very

uninteresting stage in my Chinese. I wonder whether you are still in those lodgings in **London**, you seem very comfortable, so you ought to be for the money. If I was in **Bangalore** now, you would have to go into something cheaper, but living is very cheap here. I've been doing a good deal of packing the last day or two, so as to have everything ready. After about your next letters you will have had to wait the month I was out on the **Kalgau** (?) column & you will grouse a bit, but think of the months I was without any news of you last year. I had such a nice long read in the Legation newspaper room this afternoon. Renny-Tailyour is like you & won't come so he went for a walk while I read. There is precious little difference between one day & another year. I should so like you to see many of the things here, and let you choose what to buy.

"Feb.8. I am arranging with Renny-Tailyour that I am sending you a letter, enclosed to his sister. When we want our letters addressed differently, he wires her one word & she will send you on your letter; so don't alter addressing your letters until you get that letter, do you see? If you address the same as before, China Field Force via **Hong Kong**, our letters can be stopped there. Renny-Tailyour won't send that wire until about 5 weeks before we reach **Hong Kong**. The news today is all talk. We hear lots of items of news but I expect most of them are lies. Anyhow as usual nothing is known about our leaving. The ministers are believed to be insisting on the heads of 10 Chinese officials & two others are to be ordered to commit suicide. Oh! I had such a horrid dream about you, I came home, went to your lodgings & found a note from you saying you were sorry you were going out to a theatre that afternoon, but wouldn't a very long. Then you came back with two horrible bounders whom I promptly rushed at & kicked out of the house, and then you told me you didn't love me any more & I woke up about 3 am; so just write out & comfort me & tell me that you do still love me. Manifold has been seedy the last few days with jaundice. The Germans have lost such a lot of men from enteric, 300 up in **Peking** alone, but our natives have kept a very well. My only illness just now is a corn on my left little toe. Why! Oh! Why! don't you send me those photos. Have you bought yourself a bike as I told you to? You ought to have had miniature painted, very wrong of you & I shan't love you one little bit if you don't; how lovely it would have been to have had it here. I bought a cloisonnet teapot yesterday in, the first thing I thought for a long time. Sweetheart, I feel doleful today & I do so want you with me.

"Feb.10. Really we know nothing here about when we are going, possibly you may receive a telegram from me before this reaches you. I'm just longing to be with you my pet, you have no idea how I miss you. God bless you, darling, fondest love & heaps of kisses, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

"Tear up the enclosed small note."

10<sup>th</sup> February, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, This is the worst place for getting dirty I've ever been in, one has to wash one's hands so often every day. Peking dust is well known, it is black to begin with not proper dust colour; and on a day like today in doors is the best place to be in. No news of our moving, but peace negotiations are said to be progressing. We have demanded 10 heads of chief officials & two others are to be presented with a silken cord & ordered to commit suicide, this to the Chinese is a very slight punishment compared to being executed; however it is all very slow business and I don't suppose the final peace treaty will be signed for months, but if the Chinese Court comes back here & shews signs of being reasonable, we shall probably leave about April.

"11 pm. Having written so far this afternoon in comes another chap who says he has just been told by another fellow who is staying at me Legation that Sir Ernest Satow says we can't leave before June or July. So you see we don't know much about it; however it gives us something to talk about. Our news from the Cape is very slight. We get Reuters telegrams every day except when the wire is broken, but they are very short. I should for some reasons like to stay here long enough to pass in Chinese, but it is a sort of language that one cannot learn unless one has no other work to do. My old teacher was a Chinese soldier & was wounded twice fighting against the Taepings. I'm going to ask him whether he was under Gordon. I like Col. Powell very much, he has very little work to do & gets very tired of being with the Germans, so comes down here pretty often. The Japanese have a parade tomorrow in

honour of the 2,561st anniversary of the founding of their empire. That takes one back some distance doesn't it. I wish that instead of going back to India I could go home via Japan & Canada, several fellows are hoping to do so. I'm keeping very fit now except not sleeping too well. I think that is due to the air. It is funny to see anyone come in from a walk, faces covered with dust, more like a coal bearer. The skating here is not good as the dust is too thick. I haven't skates so it doesn't make any difference to me. I shall telegraph to Ida when we do get orders to start; she will let you know when to begin addressing to India. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son Charles Ryder.

"I think I have got all your letters, but about three weeks of letters I sent off in September seemed to have gone astray."

18<sup>th</sup> February, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, Tomorrow is the Chinese new year so nobody does any work for 4 or 5 days, so I have no Chinese teacher either. The news just now is not promising for peace. The Chinese won't agree to the punishment of the officials to the extent the Powers want, so the Germans & French are very keen on advancing into the next Province to **Tai-yuan-fu**. Of course it is the one place of all places which ought to be wiped out, but still Dr. Morrison who was telling me about it yesterday said it would result in the Chinese Court never coming back to **Peking** & that China would be partitioned out, which the English are trying so hard to avoid; so now we don't know what will happen. We have had no letters for a fortnight or more. We shall get the usual two mails together soon. Our mess house keeping is divided up amongst four of us. Renny-Tailyour does the accounts, I interview the Chinese cook, Rigby does the fires & lights, Norie orders things from the Commissariat. Our food consists largely of things brought in ice. The fish come up from **Taku** or some river down south, all in ice. The pheasants & we have heaps, come in 10 days march all frozen, the grapes are kept frozen. If we are going to stay here much longer we shall have to think about arrangements for the hot weather; my room will be a very hot one, as I can get no through breeze & it faces south. The last day or two it has turned quite warm, only 6 degrees of frost at night & quite balmy in the day time. It would be just perfect weather for travelling the next two months, and I wish we were going out, but what I'm afraid will happen is that the Germans will go & we not & anyhow I'm not likely to go as Renny-Tailyour would go before me. I hope you have got through this winter all right, mother dear, without much in the way of colds. The Chinese new year is supposed to be the time when one buy curios cheapest, but not so this year. Everything is being bought up & no new things brought in. Mr Squires of the American Legation has got the best set of things, in red lacquer especially; the whole are valued at £30,000, all got in the last 6 months by purchase, not looting. Red lacquer is most beautiful work & none of it is new. I bought two little boxes. It was one of the first things the Chinese hid or the Chinese looted, because I never saw (*a*) single piece in any of the palaces.

"Much love to you all. Ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

23<sup>rd</sup> February, Peking, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, I've been expecting the mail each day this week, so haven't begun this letter before. Finally after three weeks waiting it arrived with one letter from you, written again on your beastly little paper. However I am happy with even a little of your handwriting, but want more please; you forgot to post one letter. I got a letter from your Neville Gwynne which I will answer. It was a very pleasant letter; he said you & his wife had one point (amongst many) in common & that was that you had each 3 daughters & no son! We've all been in the great state of excitement owing to its having been decided that as the Chinese kept on objecting to the peace proposals, an expedition was to start for the interior. I was to go on it & was very busy, then the Chinese heard of it & caved in & agreed to everything. Now, everybody has begun to discuss again when we are going back to India, but no one knows. I played a game of football today for the Headquarters Staff v. 7<sup>th</sup> B.I. & Feel very stiff. I'm getting a bit too old for it! We ought to get another male in a few (*days*). I am delighted at **Chucky** passing into **Sandhurst**. I must write & congratulate him. Of course now you don't send me any "Standards" I don't see those (*sic*) sort of news. I don't think you love me much now; we've been separated too long. I'm sorry you didn't go down to your people for Christmas, but I daresay your little outing with the Gwynnes did you good. There are a few Peking ladies, but not having blue uniform I avoid them, haven't called on any; there are several very

pretty ones amongst them too! IM writing late at night; I don't suppose you miss me in bed do you? or perhaps that is not a correct question to ask? but I miss you. I hope **Enid & Violet** are still alive, you don't mention them. Ida, darling, don't you know how I long for news of them, and you send me so little. You just go out & buy proper notepaper & right-wing jolly long letters, or I shall take to sending you postcards. Can **Margaret** read yet? Do they do lessons with (?), and you've never sent me the photos of yourself & **Violet**. I think I've quite right to have a good grumble & I only love you as much as you love me.

"I had a 4 day holiday from Chinese during the Chinese New Year. Probably in about a fortnight I shall go up to **Shan-hai-kuan** to do some triangulation if the weather gets clear. It is on the sea, I go by train, first down to **Taku** & then up along the coast. It has been dull weather, but much warmer. My dear pet, I'm thinking that if we go dawdling on it won't be worth your while coming out to India. I was talking to Phillips the D.A.A.G. at headquarters, all the movements of troops go through his hands & he said that there has been no sign of a withdrawal and if the question was raised tomorrow we couldn't reach India before the end of May & he doesn't think the Indian Government would be keen on the troops arriving in **Calcutta** in the middle of the hot weather, nor yet in the monsoon on account of the horses on board suffering from the bad weather. So if you don't get any telegram from me before this reaches you, (*you*) had better think what you will do for the summer; because you see London is not good for anyone in the summer & it is also pretty expensive. How I do loathe the idea of our separation getting longer & longer. I feel doleful just now, perhaps tomorrow we shall hear some shave about going. I've done all my packing, 10 boxes & I'm going to send them all home to % Grindlay & Co. Parliament Street, London. They will start from **Tientsin** early in March & take about two months getting home, that is if I see no signs of I'm leaving. I will number the boxes & give you an idea of what is in them. Now I'm very tired after my football and must go to bed.

"24<sup>th</sup> Feb. This has to go tomorrow & I begin again at 11 pm. so you won't get a long letter. The Chinese are to execute some of their officials on the 26<sup>th</sup>, two in **Peking** which is a good thing; and may help on things a bit, but this waiting is very weary work. Darling, don't let this separation make you love me less will you; you will find me too fat or too untidy or something, I know you will. Your plum pudding arrived today & we shall eat it in a day or two, thanks so much for sending it you dear. I'm always most grateful for the sleeping bag. I must do a bit more Chinese before going to bed. I went to the Legation reading room this afternoon, but only for a few minutes when one of the fellows asked me over to tea so I had to leave my dear papers.

"Feb. 25. This has to go off today & I've jolly little time. Davies is just going off from **Shanghai** to South Africa, no other news. I can't tell you yet how much money I can send you home this month, but it will be as much as I can. God bless you my sweetheart & make our meeting be soon, fondest love to your dear pretty self & to the chicks, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

25<sup>th</sup> February. **Peking**, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, I sent you of a letter today & this evening came another mail of Jan. 11. with quite a respectably a long letter, for which I send you a kiss & begin at once so as to get off a good long letter. I'm glad you've invested £400 in Russian 4%, this is about the first amount we've saved, but by Jove you've got cheek, so you've saved it have you? or what have I done? I'm very glad though it is invested, then you won't have so large a balance at the bank, and you won't feel inclined to go on the bust. You seem very comfortable, darling & it is really a great happiness to me that you are so, but it doesn't make up for our separation one little bit. Our ideas as to when asked our money should be spent don't quite agree though. I think that when I'm away you should live very cheaply & it doesn't matter what you wear, because you only want me to admire you, not other people, and then when I come home there will be a lot of money for me to have a good time on, isn't that all right. You will be glad to hear that there are no signs yet of our travelling allowance being cut. I wrote & told Cox to allow you to overdraw to the tune of £200 if you had the expenses of coming out before I could send you home enough money. I wish, darling you would write me out from Cox's passbook a list of the interest we received, each sum & how many times a year; and also the exact names of what your money is invested in, how much stock you bought & what was paid; it is all

interesting to me. I want very much to know what interest we get a year. Mrs McMillan, I remember, an awful woman, I well remember her being well painted &c. No turquoises hereabouts, but I've got a very long Mandarin's official necklace of amber. I don't know whether you care for that, I mean amber beads about this size **O**, you can tell they are real by rubbing them & then they attract bits of paper of the table, which mine did all right. I'm not buying anything now. In the Pioneers that came by this mail there is a long order altering privilege league rules, they will I think be very good. In order to prevent such frequent transfers one must now put in 18 months service between privilege leave & furlough, so one can't go home on privilege leave one year & furlough next year. That is a drawback, but on the other hand one can tack privilege leave (which is on full pay) on to furlough which practically means that every 4 years I can come home on 15 months leave, the first 3 months on full pay, instead of on a year. I wonder if you follow this, anyhow take my word for it, it's a good thing. The news today is that a force has been detailed in orders to be ready to go out if one is required, but everyone says the Chinese are caving in now. Also half the Welch Fusiliers are coming up from **Hong Kong** to relieve the Australian contingent, who go back to Australia next month. You've gone back to a decent sized notepaper. Don't you ever use that beastly little paper again. I shall write every mail for your photo till you send me one or more. The Gwynnes seem very good to you, but then I think anyone would like to take you about, I wouldn't mind doing so myself. My watch won't go, & I can't possibly trust it to a Chinese to mend. We had your plum pudding tonight, a huge great big one, it will last several days & everyone agrees it is the best we've had. The quickest that we can get answers to our letters is three months, it's a dreadful long time. It is such an intense delight to me when your letters (*arrive*) in darling & the longer the better. Fancy **Chucky** in **Sandhurst**, I'm so glad. I wonder what regiment he will go into. can now make him a small allowance, enough for him to live in a British Regiment, in India £100 a year is more than enough. Now it is really time for be to go to my lonely bed! so goodnight sweetheart, sweet dreams.

"5<sup>th</sup> March. It is a whole week I've neglected you, but for one thing I've been very busy & then they've altered the posting day. Things are looking much more hopeful for going away, although we haven't got orders yet. I've been working really all day & every day except on Sunday when I went to lunch with Colonel Powell & yesterday when I went to watch the final of the football between the 1st Sikhs & 24<sup>th</sup> P.I., the latter won. After some rather cold days it has begun to really get warmer. How I wish you were here. If we do go back to India we shall have a beastly hot time, but oh! how I do long to be with you again darling anyhow & anywhere. We ought to get another mail in a day or two. You were there very naughty little girl to stop sending me the papers; should I still be away from you when you get this please begin again to send me the "Standard" or any paper you take in.

"6<sup>th</sup> March. Mail in today, two letters from you darling of Jan. 18 & 25. I was so glad to get **Margaret's** letter I can't believe she wrote it all herself, except spelling, but you tell me so little about the children that I had no idea she could neither read or write. Your letters make me feel rather miserable darling, I can see you don't love me as much as you used to, damn these separations. I had a jolly letter from **Tommy** & also one from Father. My dear, you will find that after a bit one gets jolly little from relations, but I must say Father invariably writes most nicely about you & the children. Your mother I haven't heard from for ages. Sweetheart don't grudge poor old Bichu (?) getting more than you did of **Aunt Marian's** jewellery, don't forget you got £1000. Likewise I'm very glad that I'm in a position to keep you going without costing your parents anything. I don't grudge **Hugh & Kitty** a bit, it is much nicer to be independent. No one could have been more disappointed at your mother refusing to have the children that I was. There was really no reason whatever for her refusing. I hope should we have grandchildren that we may have them with us if necessary. Don't go talking rot about your having changed, I know quite well you're just as pretty as you ever were. Yes I suppose I am the proper person for you to unburden yourself to & have a good grouse to, but I'd sooner have a love letter, sweetheart & a photograph. Having read your two letters through a third time I've come to the conclusion that you to love me a bit still. I really do have so little time for writing; now I go of to **Shan-hai-kuan** on the 16<sup>th</sup> probably & that means packing up & lots of odds & ends. I don't think I had any other letters of

interest; you wouldn't grudge me writing as much as I can to my mother, darling, if you saw her letters, she is getting so much older. Everyone else is in bed, this is my time for writing. I have written a letter to **Chucky**. Dear little chap, he says you've been so good to him. All your family love you, only you've grown up & have your own interests & they have theirs & they are not the same, that is all. No news about our going, God alone knows, darling how much I long to be away & with you once more. I had to stop because I couldn't see the paper for a silly old tear, but oh! don't don't allow this separation to make any difference, darling; if you do you will make me feel very miserable. Don't you know that except for you I'm practically alone in the world. I don't make friends quickly, I'm not on good terms with my brother & sisters. Do you suppose I'm enjoying myself here! Father says if I'm coming home for the Chatham course next year, it seems a pity for you to break up house & come out only for a few months. I hope you will come out, but you must do what you think best; but for God's sake & for the love you have for me, write me the dear sweet letters you can write when you like.

"March 7. I lay awake a long time thinking of you, inclined to howl. Woke up this morning with very painful lumbago, which I've had a good deal of (*of*) late, however I'm all right now; but I haven't gone out for my afternoon's walk & have written to Father & **Chucky**. I do so long for this separation to be over, darling, it has been a great ambition with me to go on service once. After this I won't go out of my way to go again, but will settle down to a happy time with you. I do love & adore you more than ever I did before darling. I know my letters are just like yours short & not so loving, but still you are all the world to be, you will see when we are together I shall make love to you just like the old days. I wish you had sent me those photographs, your one is all spotted & spoilt, but it still sits on my table. I'm sorry you never imagine yourself in my arms, you are getting unromantic & a horrid old maid; on the other hand you will find me just as bad as ever I was. I broke my eyeglass today, it has lasted me for 1 ½ years think of that. Colonel Powell came in had a talk here, so I had to cover my last sentence or so with a piece of blotting paper. I say, Ida, **Margaret** does draw very well, no mistake about it, she has improved marvellously.

"Now for a little accounts. I haven't been able to send you home very much lately, £35 on Jan. 18, £30 on Feb. 18, both these from Shanghai. Now this month I can only send you £35, because I want to keep some money in hand to pay for my boxes. I shall send off from **Tientsin**, and also going to **Shan-hai-kuan** I want some money in hand. You had £90 odd in hand at the beginning of January, so that you will not have hardly anything in hand, but next month & from there onwards I will be able to send you home a good lot, I mean £60 regularly, and sometimes more. But darling I'm afraid you must come out of your London lodgings. You really ought to live quite comfortably on £50 a month, that's £600 a year you know. Of course if at any time you get a wire from me to say I'm going back to India & you decide to come out, you will have to tell Cox to sell out £200 of the money you invested. God bless you darling & may our meeting be soon, but do write me long loving letters, heaps of kisses good loving ones too, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

25<sup>th</sup> February, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, After three weeks we got two mails together, Dec. 28 & Jan. 4. You were all well. This last week we've had a certain amount of excitement, because owing to the slowness of the Chinese in agreeing to our terms, it was decided that an advance was to be made into **Shansi**, so we had to get on with our maps of that part, & everyone was busy, but the Chinese then caved in & the first important point the punishment of the officials is settled. Two of them are to be executed tomorrow in Peking by the Chinese; so there is to be no advance, but I daresay we shall have to threaten over several points. In the meantime no sign of our leaving & the general opinion is now extending to next autumn. I played a couple of days ago in a football match, feel very stiff in consequence. It has also been the Chinese New Year, so I had 4 days holiday from my Chinese. I may very likely in 10 days or so go round to **Shan-hai-kuan** to do some surveying their; it is just where the **Great Wall** reaches the sea. I shall be glad of a change. I've been having lumbago a good deal but my game of football improved that. I've knocked off a fire in my room for the middle of the day & we talk of preparations for the hot weather, ice & such like things. If they started now making arrangements we couldn't get back to India before the end of May. It is really most lovely weather now except when

the wind blows, when the dust is too awful for words. While I'm away at **Shan-hai-kuan** I shall have my room undergo a spring cleaning. There is still a certain amount of haze, due I think to the ice melting. There is still 8 or 9 degrees of frost at night. Much love to you all & forgive me so short a letter. Ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

7<sup>th</sup> March, Peking, to Ida: "My very own dearest, I'm quite certain that owing to the change in the day of posting letters I've missed a mail. I sent you of a letter this morning, but want to get on with another. I've bought such a nice book, French, about **Peking**, such lovely photographs, you will like it. I'm very anxious to get my boxes away, you will like unpacking them, but what you will do with them goodness only knows, 10 boxes altogether. There are certain boxes like two with China in them & one with bronzes that I would not open if you are in lodgings, because it will be such a job repacking them. We can now send parcels from here, but all my things are packed up in their boxes. Dear old girlie send me your photograph, do, there's a dear, only pack it up carefully. I'm a weary long distance away from you, and I long for a site of your pretty face. I can't say I've been keeping very brilliantly well all this winter, my lumbago or whatever it is has bothered me a lot, too much eating & too little exercise perhaps it is.

"9<sup>th</sup> March. If it's any consolation to you (*to*) know, I didn't write to my mother at all last week, so I must tomorrow & this has to be posted tomorrow afternoon too. Everything points to our staying on here all the summer, not a sign of our going away. Sweetheart we can make this separation a little bit easier by writing long letters to each other. I've spent another \$20 today, but that is the end of it this month or you won't be able to have any butter with your bread, but you will admire this thing. It is like a large stand looking glass that shape (*sic*) carved wood all round & where the glass would be is embroidered silk, trees, birds &c. Wingate just came in with the remark, "writing to your wife, I suppose, instead of learning Chinese." The General goes off on a tour of inspection on the 11<sup>th</sup> & the Chinese exam is fixed for April 29, which doesn't look like going, the hot weather here will be too beastly for words. I can really assure (*you*) time goes very slowly & the whole place is unutterably dull, & I just long for you. I have no end of work to do though which is a good thing. How kind the Gwynnes have been to you, but then, my dear, you (*are*) such a dear, nobody could help loving you. Sweetheart darling, it's nothing wonderful that I should love you, but why you should love me I've never been able to make out, which always makes me so afraid some day you'll shut up loving me, but you wouldn't do that would you? You'd break my heart. Now that the river at **Taku** is open & the ice melted we shall get our letters quicker, last mail took 40 days, that is about as good as we can expect. All right, old girlie, you won't be bothered with any more babies, if you don't want them. All the same I should have liked to have one boy, just as a specimen you know. Renny-Tailyour gets **Bangalore** gossip from the Fentons: that it's so long since you were there, that it wouldn't interest you. Have you quite given up Nellie Campbell & Ellie Christie, or do you still write to them. There are two young Ellie's here, one in the 24<sup>th</sup> P.I. & one in the Sappers. Major Lestock Reid is also here, his room is about 50 yards from mine, so I went over to see him about 3 months ago, haven't seen him since!! I shall probably send my Madrassi servant back to India soon & take on a Chinese. Anthony is anxious to go back, as plague is very bad in **Bangalore** & his relations have been dying. I paid off the \$300 Renny-Tailyour advanced me here & not by a cheque on London as I told you I would, so the only cheque I have drawn on Cox here is one for £36 or so to the loot fund & I've asked you to pay £20 to my mother, Cox also to pay £7 or so for insurance each quarter & about £12 a year subscriptions to Chatham. I shall be so interested to know what interest we get, you'll write & tell me, won't you. My room is getting very untidy, I sadly want you to tidy it up for me. I'm getting very fat, but what I can do perhaps walking about the hills near **Shan-hai-kuan** will then me down a bit; and you don't love me when I'm fat. Oh dear! Oh dear! What shall I do. Goodnight darling.

"March 10. I am writing to **Margaret** but posting it separately through the Chinese post, as the stamps are Chinese & have dragons on them, she will like that, but it may be a week longer. The Americans have a game of baseball this morning. Renny-Tailyour wanted me to go & watch it, but had this & other letters to write. We shall go for a walk on the wall at 4 o'clock instead. Manifold asked me today

to go for another exploration with him after this show was over, but I said no! thank you. So you see, I do want to be with you again, just a little bit! I wish they would allow wives up here & I'd wire to you to come out here, but I'm afraid there will be no such luck. I wonder whether you are still in **London** or where you are. For the children you ought to be in the country, and it is less dull in town. You really mustn't expect much of a letter next mail, because I shall be packing up, but you can look forward to unpacking the boxes. What you will do with many of the things goodness only knows. My very fondest love, my sweetheart. Kisses many to your dear pretty self & the chicks, for ever Your very devoted lover & husband, Charlie."

10<sup>th</sup> March, Peking, to Margaret<sup>56</sup>: "My dear **Margaret**, I was so glad to get your letter and now I hope you will often write to me, because you see, **Margaret**, I am all alone out here, while you've got Mother, **Enid** and **Violet** with you. There is no more fighting here now the Chinese have all run away; there are only ready to fight when there are 100 of them to one Englishman. They are horrid people and have been oh! so cruel when they could catch anyone by themselves. I've never seen so many crows here, they all flew away when they heard they guns being fired but now they have come back and wake me every morning by cawing in a tree above my house. I had a dear little dog, a pug, but he was stolen. It has been so cold all the winter, much colder than you have had it, and we all wore fur coats, mine was lined inside was very soft sheep's wool. I think **Margaret** the best plan would be for you to ask Mother to come out and fetch me home, what do you think? Anyhow gift dear mother a good kiss from me, will you. I don't think **Violet** remembers me, but you must tell her all you remember when I was at home. Give **Enid** & **Violet** each a good hug from me please. Ever your loving Father."

10<sup>th</sup> March, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, I'm afraid I've missed a mail, the dates of posting have been altered, owing to the river at **Taku** being opened owing to the melting of the ice, & the letters don't go round any more via **Shan-hai-kuan**. There are no signs of our moving. General Gaselee goes off tomorrow on a tour of inspection, which doesn't look like moving & the Chinese exam is fixed for April 29. The weather has been gradually getting warmer, last night there were only 7° of frost. I had two mails from you last week, Jan. 18 & 25. You were mostly having colds. I also got my first letter from **Margaret**, really very well written, with some A.1. Illustrations. She has made such an advance in her drawing. I wonder how long it will be before I see them again. The general opinion here is that we shall not get away till next autumn, it is not so much the Chinese that are making difficulties, it is the Powers who can't agree on what to demand. Of course the Russians will stick to Manchuria now just as we have stuck to Egypt; that the French want to have a bit of Yunnan badly. We shall have lovely weather for two months now. I go off to **Shan-hai-kuan** on the 18<sup>th</sup> & have a lot to do packing & arranging about work. Everybody asks everybody else here what is the news, but no one knows, the usual wild rumours are always flying about. It is rather difficult to get exercise here, walking is my principal one, but I want something more violent. Nobody has come prepared for another summer here in the way of khaki. Living is pretty cheap, that is the things that can be bought from the Chinese. European things are of course about double their **Shanghai** price. Would you give this autograph to Una, it is one from le Marquis Salvago di Raggi, the Italian Minister. I will get her others as I have the opportunity. If any arrangements are being made for our leaving China I don't think we will be made public till the last moment, otherwise the Chinese would take even longer to come to terms that (*sic*) the Powers amongst themselves. Colonel Powell seems doubtful about **Wilfred** getting his leave; he, Col. Powell should get command of one battalion in Sept. but thinks Col. Fulton may get an extension. When he last was with his regiment he was a wing commander, now if he went back he would only command a double company according to the new plan. He has very good quarters in the Empress' own palace. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

10<sup>th</sup> March, Peking, to Ida: "My pretty sweetheart, it is so difficult to believe you are really pretty when your photo is all covered with spots, so please hurry up & send me out another, several. We have dinner at 8 o'clock now owing to see days lengthening, which gives a good time before dinner for writing &c. A Shanghai mail came in today, but the English mail brought to come in a couple of days or so. I hope

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56 Aged 7½.

I shall get a good long letter. I see the Empress of Russia is going ahead of you and she is "expecting" shortly. I wonder whether she will have a boy. I didn't go out for long today as it was so windy, one of the days that would make you look so untidy & pretty & the dust was awful. I posted a letter to **Margaret** at the Chinese post office. I still cling to the hope that we may get away this spring, but the general opinion is not. I wonder where you will be when this reaches you. I think, Ida, when we come out after the Chatham course it will be much more satisfactory to leave our children at some good school in the country like you were all left at Mrs Barn's. Leaving them with relations (if any did offer!) might lead to difficulties & rows.

"March. 11. Early morning. Except when the wind blows we climb it is delightful. I continually keep thinking how I wish you were here. I want very much to go home with you one time by Japan & Canada. It would be so jolly; I believe I should really enjoy a sea voyage with you, but we've got to meet first. Sweetheart, you have the children with you, you're living in London, going to the theatres &c. & What am I doing all the time. Do you think I am having 1/100th as good a time as you are, so please will you save up some money for me to have a good time when I come home.

"March. 12. Rather unlucky this morning, I gave orders for no fire in my room & it is very cold, thermometer down to 19° (*Fahrenheit*) last night, so I've been bustling about. I shall be sending you two groups this mail of our mess. You will see that I'm rather scowling & I haven't waxed my moustache, because I was suddenly told the chap was ready. The group is like this as you look at it:) Ryder, Wingate & the house behind is our mess, (*in front*) Norie, Renny-Tailyour, Rigby. It looks rather grander in the photo than it really is. I hope you will love me a little when you get a photo & say something nice. Nobody ever says nice things to me now! We are being kept here owing to the games the Russians are playing; but every now & then some fellow goes back to India to take up an appointment. I wish I were off. I've discovered that my Chinese syer (?) has a hereditary title & two eyed peacock's feather, that is to say he's a sort of Baronet, if the family & house & everything were destroyed by Boxers, so I am going to promote him to be my servant, *vice* Anthony who I am sending back to India. With Chinese servants I shall learn more Chinese; my old Chinese teacher said, "if you weren't married, of course the way of learning is still have a Chinese wife"; but strange to say I haven't found one, they are not quite so good looking as you!! Father always writes about **Enid's** looks each time he sees her, how very pretty she is. You have never told me how **Margaret** looks with a new set of teeth. I'm afraid your chances of getting the Rs1,000 for Chinese are very small, but you can imagine to yourself how you would spend it if you did get it. Now it's time for breakfast & then afterwards Chinese & maps & no time for writing to you.

"March 15. mail in last night, yours of Feb. 2. You are a darling; the little photo of **Violet** is a sweet (*one*), the others are awful of **Margaret** & you, spider comes out best. When being photoed by amateurs never let them take a close photo, a half distant group is all right. Now in return I'll send you my photos. **Violet** looks like **Margaret**. I've been so happy with your letter, sweetheart, do write nice ones always won't you, because I feel very depressed at times. There is not a sign of our going, but the Americans are. I go off on the 18<sup>th</sup> to **Shan-hai-kuan** & I'm just beginning to see what clothes I'll take, so my room is sort of half untidy. We shall I think get our mails regularly now in 40 days. My darling I only wish I could get 3 months leave, but no earthly chance of it. How good of me to send that £105, I'd quite forgotten it, at least I thought it was included in the money you invest it, so now you are all right. If you are happier in town, darling, stay as long as you like, only I think £60 a month ought to be your limit. You see while we are at Chatham, my pay will be about £350 a year, and we shall want about £300 extra for that year, so please to remember that. My idea always is to live quietly for a time then have a bust in town. I want you so very much to get yourself a bicycle & keep up your riding. I should so love riding in the country with you. I'll promise to go slow & go short distances & do anything you like as long as you're with me. I was dining out last night, so couldn't write but I had a 2<sup>nd</sup> read of your letter in bed and a 3<sup>rd</sup> this morning. I'm getting too fat, my dear, so I shall be very glad of the exercise of walking about the hills at **Shan-hai-kuan**.

"11 pm. I went down to the station to arrange about my going off, I wish I was going back to you. I'm

so sleepy tonight I can only scribble a bit. I may miss a mail next week going to going up to **Shan-hai-kuan**, but I shall love you just as much. Goodnight, darling.

"March. 17. My room is all dismantled now so I'm not very comfortable. The train starts at 8.40 am. tomorrow & the station is quite 2 miles away, so I shall have to be up early. Yesterday I went down to Jamieson and the Chinese secretary to see how I was getting on in Chinese, he said I want a lot more practice in talking, but my accent is good & that from him was great praise. Now while I'm away I shall do all the talking I can & not do much bookwork. God bless you, my darling sweetheart, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

16<sup>th</sup> March, Peking to Julia: "My dearest mother, I feel quite delighted at the idea of getting out of Peking for a bit, I leave on the 18<sup>th</sup>; I don't know what the mail arrangements are at **Shan-hai-kuan** so I may miss next mail. No news from here, everything is at a standstill owing to the Russian secret treaty with the Chinese about Manchuria. This hasn't been ratified yet & the other Powers are protesting as hard as they can. In the meanwhile we have to wait here. The weather is just getting perfect, always excepting windy days, when the dust is awful. Ida sent me out some photos taken by one of the Greaves. Spider is the only success; port **Margaret** is twice clean out of focus. Amateurs photos are all right for scenery or half distant groups, but for near photos they are always bad. We are getting our mails very regularly now, just 40 days from England's here. Your last letter was from Cheltenham, Feb. 1. It must have been a sad seeing Cousin **Lucy** without Cousin **Rose**<sup>57</sup>. When I come back from **Shan-hai-kuan**, that will be I think in a month, I am going to move over to a room facing north, as my present one facing south & next to the pantry would be so horribly hot in summer. By the bye, don't mix up **Shan-hai-kuan** with **Shanghai**. The former place is 100 miles or so north of **Tientsin** where the **Great Wall** reaches the sea. The French have got their line from **Paotingfu** into the city & trains are late; it is a line which will be made on to **Han Kow**. In the next 10 years in a number of lines will be built in China & they will pay hand over fist if under Europeans. The one from **Tientsin** to here pays 15 per cent, but then there are Boxers & such like people to be thought of. I hope the South African War is really nearly over. We shall then be able to stand up to the Russians a bit more up here. I shall be always glad of any stray newspapers, you have sent me many already, also magazines. I'm feeling very fit now, only I can't get enough exercise, I mean hard exercise. Nobody is looking forward to the summer in **Peking**, but in comfortable houses we shall be better off than on the march up to **Tientsin** & the first month in the Legations. **Margaret** is now added to my list of correspondence, much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

20<sup>th</sup> March 1901, Tientsin, to Ida: "My pretty sweetheart, It is quite funny being in a civilised house again, in the R. E. mess here. I came down on the 18<sup>th</sup>; the train doesn't go very fast yet, & the country is all quite flat & very ugly. It was rather interesting seeing where our fights at **Peitsang** & **Yangtsun** took place. Yesterday was simply awful day, a regular dust storm, couldn't see 50 yards. I sent off my ten boxes.

No.1. contains very heavy bronzes, carved from the Temple of Heaven.

Nos. 2 & 4. contain China.

No. 3. A small cabinet & about 50 yellow silk table clothes, really book covers.

No. 5. contains a screen frame & a lot of big scrolls, painted, the 18 torture set amongst them.

Then there is one wrapped in cloth which also contains a screen frame & 4 others which contain all sorts. Now of course it all depends where you are; what you will do with them; but no. 2 & 4, I certainly should not open in any temporary house, but send them straight from Grindlay I thereto your Father's or my Mother's & then pay them a visit. The China may never could take out to India with us so that we must leave it somewhere. You will not be able to tell what is old & what isn't. Next about the bronze box, I should I think do the same with that; it is awfully heavy & will cost a lot if you move about with it. The two screens are not very interesting. The remaining four boxes are full of all sorts of things, one has eight fur long coats, no sables, those 4. No. 3. you will find interesting to open. The only thing I should like to see whether we could sell or not is those yellow book covers, I have altogether

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<sup>57</sup> I can't trace who these cousins were.

nearly 100; under no circumstances would we use more than 20, including any you like to give away. They are very valuable, merchants here have paid £2 for each; but if you sell & give any away, please will you remove the long tape & have them ironed & folded neatly. A shop like Liberty would I think give you a good lot for them. I have quite 20 with me in Peking. The shipping people told me they might reach England in two months but probably 2½ months; they are addressed to Grindlay to whom I am sending the bill of lading & am telling them to do what you want with them. Don't be disappointed with the things darling, there is a lot of rubbish. Anyhow I give them all to you. The most valuable things are the bronzes, I think, they come from the Temple of Heaven, belonged to the Emperor & are about 180 years old, carved not cast. I leave here day after tomorrow for **Shan-hai-kuan**.<sup>58</sup> Do make love to me when you write, nobody ever pays me compliments or says nice things but nobody ever did!

“21<sup>st</sup>. God bless you, fondest love & heaps & heaps & heaps of kisses, forever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

23<sup>rd</sup> March, **Tong Shan**, to Ida: “My darling sweetheart, I had hoped for a mail at **Tientsin** but it hadn't arrived when I left. I didn't come very far yesterday, not 100 miles I should think; first down to **Taku**, our tr (*sic*) engine twice ran away from us & had to come back; the couplings got undone. I had breakfast in the little French restaurant at **Tangku** & then at **Hanku** the bridge has been destroyed, so we had to walk across & get into another train, waiting two hours, however I was asked up to have lunch at the post & then came on here, got in at 5.30. Pottinger, of the Intelligence came out to meet me & I'm putting up with him in a very nice house belonging to the coal mines. This was the headquarters of the railway, with coal mines, cement works &c. quite a busy place. The weather is fine but very hazy, so as I could do nothing in this weather I've decided to stop here tonight & go up to **Shan-hai-kuan** tomorrow. Pottinger told me that he sold his yellow silk book covers to a dealer for \$15 each, that is £1.10s; and directly after another dealer said he would give him \$30 or £3 for each; so they must be very valuable. If you want to make a good present, say to the Gwynnes you could give them one. I have a nice little room. I have only a Chinese servant now. I left Anthony in **Tientsin** to go back to India. On the 21<sup>st</sup> I went & had lunch with the Kells, he had come out before the row to learn Chinese & brought his wife with him & Mrs Hume was staying with them (wife of Capt Hume R. E.) Who is up in **Peking**, but she isn't allowed to go up to Peking & there is a bit of a row on about her coming even to **Tientsin**. If they open short leave, Ida, now would you like to come out or go to **Japan**. I could get six weeks leave, & meet you at **Shanghai**, I should love that. Of course it would count, with me, as privilege leave, so I can't make use of it unless you came out. I've got into a regular habit of waking early, 6.30 or so, I'm afraid it will annoy you, because I should want to make love to you while you “hogged.” The shops in **Tientsin** are still quite empty. Sweetheart, you would be a darling if you would send me out a cigar case, a common one for jungle use. I want boots badly, but I will get them on the way up or back. I think I shall be about a month here. Your remittance will be a bit late I'm afraid, owing to my being away from **Peking**. I caught a heavy cold, 5 pockies (*sic*) a day sort, on the way down from **Peking**.

“24<sup>th</sup> March. Here I am at **Shan-hai-kuan**, started at 7.30 got in at 3.30; the journey up was interesting because I was on the lookout for nice little hills for my triangulating. Halfway I met the down train with Colonel Powell on board, & General Reid who commands here got in (*sic*). When I got here Major Petrie R. E. met me & took me off to the General's mess, where I have a nice room. After tea I went out for a walk, out to the Great Wall to look around. The air is so lovely here, as the sea is only about 2 miles off; only seeing the sea makes me sad & makes me long to be with you. It is only a small mess, three others besides the General, they all seem pleasant, but I hate going among strangers at first. I think I shall stay here about a week & then gradually work my way down towards **Tongshan**. This air has made me feel quite sprightly. There are about 4 or 5 miles between the sea & the hills, cultivated fields & a whole lot of mud forts & a small walled city. This house is quite out in the open amongst their fields. It seems such an age since I got a letter from you. I shall be out pretty well all day while I'm

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<sup>58</sup> Now Shanhaiguan on the coast NE of Tianjin (Tientsin).

here, but you will get more letter from me than while I'm in **Peking**. My old razor I've had for 14 years has suddenly gone awfully blunt; I don't know what I shall do. The fellows in this mess are Capt. Hudson, 19<sup>th</sup> B. L., D.A.A.G., Capt. Kemball, 29<sup>th</sup> P. I., A.D.C and Capt. Cruddas, signalling officer. I had sort of small scratch meals all today, so I have a strong craving in my inside, which will stop my writing.

“March 25. I am nicely settled down now, just had breakfast, now I'm waiting for my surveyor to go round & see where we will do our work. My Chinese doesn't have much time except that only having a Chinese servant I have to talk to him. I haven't got over the delightful air; but there's a strong wind blowing up & that means dusts; the whole place is very sandy.

“March 26. A mail came in yesterday, but nothing for me. Mine have to go to **Peking** first I'm afraid, but I think this had better go off. My very fondest love, & heaps of kisses, you darling, for ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

“Kiss the 3 chicks & when are they going to be 4.”

26<sup>th</sup> March, Shan-hai-kuan, to Julia: “my dearest mother, I left Peking on the 18<sup>th</sup> having to get up early. On the way down we passed **Yangtsun & Pei-tsang** where we had our flights, one could hardly recognise them, owing to the fields being now quite bare, while there the crops were some of them 8 or 10 feet high. I stayed till the 22<sup>nd</sup> at **Tientsin**. The great excitement there was first a row with the Russians over a railway siding which got so far that both sides had armed parties lying in trenches opposite each other, however that is blown over now. The other was the bad behaviour of the French soldiers; they had been making themselves very objectionable in our concession, getting drunk & swaggering about in bands of 10, pushing people off the pavement & so on. So, after 3 warnings, they were forbidden to come into our concession. This annoyed them so much, that they got quite out of hand, any Englishman who passed through their concession was set upon & insulted. One British officer in uniform was dragged off his horse & badly assaulted. Our sepoys longing to go for them as their sepoys have a great contempt for the French soldier of the line. However that also had settled itself when I left. I had to sleep the night at **Tongshan**, where there are coal mines as the trains don't run at night, then stayed one more day there & came on here on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The country from **Tongshan** onwards here is much nicer, one gets between the hills & sea, but one doesn't see the sea actually. Here the hills are about 5 miles from the sea. There is a small town walled, & the Great Wall comes across the plain & up over the hills, in a bad state of repair, but everywhere there are big earth forts armed with modern guns, or else fortified villages. It all surrendered without a shot being fired; although we were first here, we allowed the Russians to seize the railway & hence all the bother to get it back. I think the differences between us & the Russians are becoming very marked. Yesterday I was out all day looking out for suitable places to triangulate from. The sea air was delightful. I have a comfortable room in a Chinese house in General Reid's mess, but I shall only stay here a week or so & then move back along the railway line to **Tongshan**. Much love to you all ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

27<sup>th</sup> March, Shan-hai-kuan, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, As I came back from work yesterday I met my mail with quite a big mail & a real two full pages of you; so I am very happy & you shall have a good one in return; but I will begin by answering your questions. Yes, £4,000 was more than I expected you would have in hand so I congratulate you. I shan't pass in Chinese as the exam is only April 29, & I have no time to work now. I wouldn't at all mind being ignorant like you, because first of all your not ignorant at all, you dear sweet sensible little girl & you have a very pretty face, which I should like to kiss, & when you're dressed you've got a sweet figure; when you're undressed well, however I'll tell you about that when we meet. I have sent my boxes of things home. You may do anything you like with the things, only the China I wouldn't give away because some is old & some isn't & you would probably give away the good treasure up (?) the stiff ins (?) Yes, I know, it's a dreary long time since I've is home; it's all your fault though, you always said you wished I wore uniform, well here I am wearing it. I wrote a letter to Neville Gwynne, I'm sure they are most kind to you. Now then to answer your letters about **Peking**, yes there are a few ladies belonging to the legations, the two in the British Legation are both

good looking. I haven't called, but sat next one at lunch once. Then there are a certain number of ladies of easy virtue, mostly Americans from **Shanghai**, but I needn't tell you I don't know them; and as for Chinese my dear, they are really ugly. With such a pretty sweet wife as I have I'd sooner wait twenty years for you then look at anyone else. I think Renny-Tailyour & Rigby are my two greatest friends, we always did an afternoon walk together. Yes, we are always in uniform, no red, but khaki; some fellows wear blue now & again, but I don't, not having it here. No, I don't wear a sword, but the British have left off wearing them out here, as useless on service. I have a Chinese pony, small, with a shaggy mane, who goes along splendidly. Yes I ride on it & I don't fall off. I don't know when our despatches will be published, after the South African ones I suppose. I shan't get any reward though, I'm quite certain of that. I have sent you two photographs, two copies of each; if you can spare one, send one to my mother with you; she would so like to have it. I think your idea is a good one, a cottage in the country for the summer & town in the winter. The very small trees I haven't seen. I think they are Japanese & I've (*sic*) told my poor little dog was stolen, long long ago. Now, please, Ida, send me out "Standards" there's a dear. I hurt my knee coming down off a tower in one of the forts yesterday, it was very stiff but is much better this morning.

"12.30. Just come in, after working from 9; this afternoon I'm going out late as I want to stay out till after dark to shoot some stars. None of the fellows in this mess seem to have newspapers, don't you feel for me. I think, my love, I should feel rather chary about the typewriter; you see a spelling mistake looks so much worse in print. Now you just answer a few of these questions: (1) Did you ever get my letter saying you were to buy a bicycle as my present & use it. (2) Did you ever get any letters from me asking for a photo or more of you. (3) What do the children do in their way of lessons now. (4) Did you ever send Una £1 for her village library from me. (5) Did you ever get Major Renny-Tailyour's letter. (6) Don't you think I'm just as good looking as you are? (7) Are you ever going to present me with a son, or at any rate do you wish ever do have one? (8) Did aunt **Mina** ever get a letter from me thanking her for helping you knit my sweater. (9) Do you love me! If you do, state how much & describe your feelings. This is like an examination paper. (10) Shall I find your chest measurement increased? (11) What sort of stays do you wear? (12) Do you wear open work stockings any more? (13) You haven't described any new dresses for ever so long, perhaps you haven't been getting any but are saving up the money to take me to theatres. You know when I come home, you will be quite blasé with theatres. (14) Do you still feel inclined to go to Scotland, for a trip. Renny-Tailyour told me that one can take a house for a short time or stay at inns before shooting begins very cheaply & without any crowd. I haven't made you a present for a long time, but now I've sent you home 10 cases. I shall expect to have a lot of kisses, & I shall be so interested to know what you particularly like, & what you don't like. Mind you tell me. Now, what I should like would be 1 cigar case, 2 celluloid collars, size 16½, & low 2¼ inches, to wear with khaki uniform. Will you send these out.

"March 28. So very windy & cold today, too windy to observe up on the forts so I have stayed in this morning. A mail comes here tomorrow, so I will send this off today & have your knew letter to answer next mail. If only the weather would clear, I need only stay here 3 days more; but I like being here & I shall not be comfortable on my way back putting up at small posts &c. God bless you, my only darling, I adore you from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. Fondest love, for ever Your loving husband & lover, Charlie."

29<sup>th</sup> March, Shan-hai-kuan, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, A mail came in yesterday, with yours of the 15<sup>th</sup> Feb; unfortunately you had received no letter from me, so you didn't love me very much & that affects my letter. I had a long day out beginning at 6, & not having any lunch; it was beautifully clear weather & I wanted to get as much done as possible. Now if it is only clear tomorrow I shall have finished my work here; and could leave on the 31<sup>st</sup> but may have to stop a day or two extra. It was so cold last night, a hard frost, & a little snow. What a nuisance nurses seem to be, you poor dear, you seem to have a lot of bother & I can't be of any help. I have to be up at 6 tomorrow; the other fellows in the mess are playing bridge in the next room, but I love you & so I am writing to you. Govt. have raised the rate of exchange at which our pay is drawn to 1R 9as for a dollar; so I should lose by sending

home money through the bank, & must remit you money from India, which will take a little longer doing. A small force is going out from here. I could go if I liked, but have too much work to do, so I'm sending a surveyor; it is only after some robbers who have been kicking up a row. I don't think you really love me, otherwise you would have sent me out the "Times" with all the South African despatches. I should be so grateful, darling, for any odd papers all magazines as well as your daily paper regularly.

"31<sup>st</sup>. I'm up at 6, each morning & go out to work, but today was too hazy; I had got up however, so first wrote a letter to Renny-Tailour & now I can write to you, but please I haven't got a very nice pen. I heard that I had received \$132 from the Prize money, say £13, not much. Blow this hazy weather it is too sickening. Why don't you want to have a boy, I thought every married woman wanted to have one at least; you would be very proud of him, and when we meet we shall have been separated so long. It would be a very likely thing to happen, but I don't think there is the slightest chance of our ever having a son, unless you very much want to have one, before we meet! Now just think about it a bit. We couldn't have a better time than when I come home, then you could have it in England, we should be together all the time. Only, Ida, dear, your temper is awful at those times & you don't like being loved or kissed or anything.

"1<sup>st</sup> April. I haven't made good progress with my letter this week. Today is quite cold again, all cloudy & hazy, looks like rain. I couldn't do any observing, but perhaps we may have clear weather after this. I want to be off now I'm getting tired of **Shan-hai-kuan**. I say, Ida, if you feel so disposed you might give my mother one of the fur coats if you like, just as you like, there are 8 I think. I wish I was going to unpack those boxes along with you, don't you feel excited, as to what is in them. Write & tell Grindlay, 52 Parliament Street what to do with them & mind you tell all what you like & what you don't like. It's no use hoping to get away before the autumn & that means that I shall get my 3 months leave on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 9 months hence, what a dreadful long time to look forward to 3<sup>rd</sup> April. There was such a storm of wind & rain yesterday afternoon, gradually turning into snow & now this morning it is still very cloudy & the hills covered with snow, though very little lies down here. I hope this will have the effect of clearing the air. You darling, this is an awfully stupid letter. General Reid here thinks still that a large part of the force will leave before the summer, whether he knows anything or not, I don't know. The German officers think many of them (*will*) leave & the French that half their force will. My dear, how I would jump with joy. We received the final instalment of the loot fund \$132, makes \$162 in all; now that comes to £16, please darling, will you go with £16 to a jewellers & buy yourself something from me; because you see I can buy you nothing here for your birthday; but you had better wait a little till I remit home this month's pay. I shall send £70. I am afraid there is no chance of getting the Chinese Reward; I can't work at it regularly now & the exam is on at the end of this month. I'm feeling very well, the change here has done me good. I hope you liked the groups' photos I sent you; forgive me for not waxing my moustache, but I can't on service. It is still quite cold enough for fires & I wear my fur cap still. Last mail I actually got a letter & a long one from your mother; I was so glad because I didn't like feeling dropped. She says now she wishes she hadn't taken the house, because of the smells. Mind you write & tell me at once if Harry passes; and, Ida, when either of the boys get their outfit will you give them something from us; £5 to each say. It is just a time when it is so nice getting presents, because there are lots of things a boy wants. I suppose Father will want them both to go to India; and I suppose he can now afford to give them an allowance; £60 a year is I think the minimum required, in a British Regiment. I will send you home every month now as much as I can; darling, it's the only thing I can do; you must run your own show, but you don't know how very very dear you are to me; so take care of yourself & make love to me, a little, please, Ida. Fondest love & kisses no end, for ever Your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

"Kiss the 3 for me, you dear little mother of how many?"

1<sup>st</sup> April, Shan-hai-kuan, to Julia: "my dearest mother, Feb. 15 is your last. You had had a cold; you don't half take care of yourself mother dear, I am quite sure. It has turned so cold today, a strong North wind & no sun, makes me wish you would always have a fire in your room in the winter. Owing

to the weather I can do no work today. It is so jolly being abided to see again, the change is very pleasant. I was glad to get away from **Peking** for a bit. I sent £20, because owing to my being in Yunnan, I never sent you the £10 at the end of 1899; so it was for two years. I spend very little here, one couldn't if one wanted to, except on curios or Peking, and I spent all I think I ought to there, and also invested £400 in Russians. I reached here on the 24<sup>th</sup> & am living in a Chinese house with the headquarters mess of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (?) brigade, who are stationed here. The row way from here to **Tientsin** is in our hands, but outside the Wall it is Russian. Very many thanks for the newspapers you send they are all very welcome. I don't think we shall stay actually in **Peking** for the hot weather, we shall either camp near the sea or possibly the headquarters may go out to the Summer Palace. Any place will be better than **Peking**. The hot weather here is not nearly so long as in India. We are still having flies & haven't taken to wearing helmets or solar topis yet. Yes, I got your parcel, & have been wearing all the things to wear & the edibles I have with me now, to use when I go out from here surveying. The water off the coast here is very shallow & even the small ships have to lie out a couple of miles. We are enjoying fish & oysters here; in fact living very well. The Russians & Germans are very much settling down, bringing their wives out, looking as if they meant to stop, doesn't it. The French soldiers still are very unruly & are continually having rows with our men & the Japs. The French officers seem to have very little control over them, that is the line regiments, but the Zonaves (?) & Chasseurs d'Afriques are very much better men in every way. I hear Watts Jones R.N. came back to **Peking** with his brother's body & it was buried at **Peking**, he did a very fine thing. He asked for an escort, but couldn't get one, so just (*went*) out with the Belgian missionary by himself, with some armed Christians. The British Minister & legation never knew he had gone till he came back. The Chinese officials are all now on their best behaviour & helped him, but still he ran a good deal of risk. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

6<sup>th</sup> April, **Pei-ta-ho**, to **Ida**: "My own darling of love, I'm writing under novel circumstances, in a railway carriage, aren't I writing well too. That's a joke! because my carriage is shunted into a siding. I have the use of one of the railway official's carriages, so nice with chair, table, bed & stove, so I'm very comfortable. This is about 20 miles or so from **Shan-hai-kuan** back towards **Tientsin**. I got out here by train at 11, then walked off to a hill about 4 miles off, did some good observations & got back about 5; now I've had tea & finished up my angle book; just having my stove lit. Tomorrow I go off to another hill 3 miles off, just above the sea, but hope to be back in time to catch the train on two more stations to **Changli**; but I must turn out of my nice carriage tomorrow because it is wanted to back. The weather is simply perfect here, how I wish you were here. The military post is 3 miles away, but there is a guard at the railway station under a subadar<sup>59</sup>; so I'm quite safe. I have my own escort of 7 men of the 6<sup>th</sup> Jats<sup>60</sup>. My surveyor comes out from **Shan-hai-kuan** tomorrow with I hope a mail for me. **Pei-ta-ho** is this sort of watering place for the summer for **Tientsin** & **Peking**. There were a lot of houses near the beach, but they were all destroyed by Boxers. The climate here is points better than India. Here it is 6<sup>th</sup> April & it is just like an Indian coldest weather (*sic*), only the sun is not half so hot. I don't think topis will be necessary for another month or more. The hot weather is beastly but then it is so short compared to India. Now it's nearly dark, so I've shut the door of my carriage as it is quite cold. This reminds me of being by myself in Yunnan, and you get more letters from me, but at many of the stations there is a British officer, then I must talk instead of writing. The last few days again there has been more talk of a possibility of our going back to India, but scarcely anyone wants to except myself; even if you didn't come out we should be so much nearer. I know you will look awfully pretty when we meet, so it's no good saying you won't. I shall have to go through **Calcutta**; so if you were coming out, a wire addressed Ryder, Surveys, **Calcutta** would fetch me, because you would have to let me know your steamer & the date you expected to arrive at **Bombay**; so that I could meet you; but this is all very previous, because I haven't left China yet.

59 Subedar is a historical rank in the Indian Army, ranking below British commissioned officers and above non-commissioned officers.

60 The Jat people (also spelled Jatt) are a community of traditionally non-elite tillers and herders in Northern India and Pakistan.

“7<sup>th</sup> April. I got up early, went off to my hill & found there was a dense haze on; so I came down to the post here, found Jameson 6<sup>th</sup> Jats here & decided to move my things over as my hill is quite close to the post & some distance from the railway station; now I have some time to stop here, unless I have luck & it clears again. It is curious here, there are a lot of European houses, 30 or so, only the walls left standing, but they are dumped down in a funny way, reminds me of that funny little place near **Boulogne** we went to see. The houses only used in the summer for 3 months or so & empty all the rest of the year. I got a mail today but my dear Ida, no mail from you; please explain & beg pardon. I have a nice Chinese room; but I want to get on with my work. We are right down on the beach, only about 100 yards from the sea.

“8<sup>th</sup> April. All yesterday was hazy & today seems just as bad; such a nuisance Jameson who is the only chap here isn't particularly interesting & I long for you more than ever. You remember Mrs Mockler at Eastbourne, well her son took one of these houses for the winter two years ago with his wife & children to learn Chinese; no other Europeans here; now that is the sort of time I should enjoy with you, perhaps you would get tired of me though. I've finished all my cheroots I'm sorry to say & have to smoke a pipe. Of course if we have much of this weather it will take me ages to finish my work; because as far as I can see I have about 6 hills more to go up, only one of them is at all high. It's rather a nuisance about remitting money, Renny-Tailyour said we couldn't use Govt. remittance transfer receipts, so I fancy he & I will draw our pay in India; but your remittance will be delayed. When I passed through **Tientsin** again I shall have to go a buster in underclothes for the hot weather; thin vests, drawers & socks & shirts & suchlike. I suppose now I'm not with you, you don't mind what sort of things you wear underneath; I should love to see you now in your chemise & nothing else, please. The only thing you ought to be grateful to our separation for is that if we had never been separated you would have had 5 children by now & expecting no. six; so you see who have something to be thankful for. You are a very naughty little girl not to have written this week & please when are you going to send me out my “Standards”. It is still jolly cold, there is no fireplace in my room; so I go & warm myself in the sun every now & again. I say, Ida, I do hope now that **Margaret & Enid** are doing a regular lessons. I don't want them to be backward & if you can, always take them to see any sites you can; Tower of London, **Margaret** is quite old enough to enjoy. You tell me absolutely... (*stops mid sentence*).

“April 9. I'm having a dull time, I have a certain amount of computing out my triangulation to do, but no nothing to read; how I should love to get a letter from you. I've sent in a man today to **Shan-hai-kuan** he will come in tomorrow & may get some mail for me. This is just the sort of day I should like some “Standards”. Col Westmorland commanding the 6<sup>th</sup> Jats came out to look at this post, he had heard that probably the Imperial Service troops out here would go back to India, in a month, i.e. 1 regiment of cavalry, 2 of infantry & 1 company of sappers, I daresay it isn't true, but how I wish I could go with them. If you write & say again I don't feel the separation I shall begin to get angry; you have the children at any rate with you & I have nothing, sitting in a beastly little Chinese room, all by myself, nothing to read, no cheroots to smoke, only a pipe which wants cleaning badly. Jameson has got out somewhere or other; there are no signs of its getting any clearer. I might do some Chinese, but my teacher is away in the Chinese village & I feel too lazy.

“6 o'clock. Now I'm all right I have a nice nib. How I should enjoy waiting for clear weather if only you were here. I've just been out for a walk along the beach; the coast is not pretty, very low, except just for these little hills here, but it is very fresh & healthy. Jameson goes into **Shan-hai-kuan** tomorrow & another chap of his regiment relieves him. News I have none. Reuter says Russia has had to give up the Manchuria agreement with China which is good because now they can get on with the peace negotiations a bit. There may be news at **Peking** but there's certainly none here. Perhaps you would like to hear that I love & adore you more than ever. I often think of how jolly we could be in camp together. I'm so much more experienced now, we could have all sorts of comforts; but one thing I wish one could do without & that is an ayah<sup>61</sup>, so little use & such a nuisance. How I should love planning

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61 A nurse or maid native to India.

out lists of stores if only you were coming with me; but I really hope you will be able to come out with me to the Shan Hills; now there is a railway, one can get through the feverish parts at once & once up onto the hills one is all right. I'm afraid it will be a long time before we get our medal for this show, but it is quite possible we may get two. It is hard luck that my first time of service should have been such a long one on the top off a journey in **Yunnan**, because I am quite sick of it now & would chuck medals & everything to be with you & more than that I can't say. I hope I shall get a letter tomorrow. **Una** wrote out & asked me if I still wanted to sell at all stamps. I said, "yes certainly", but I don't think they are worth anything. I shall be glad to get back to **Peking** & comparative civilisation. I haven't got a good camping bundobast<sup>62</sup> with onlya Chinese servant, but I get along all right. I'm feeling very fit, but sick of everything & everybody. I do find everybody so uninteresting compared to you. You are such a jolly little companion.

"April 10. It has been a much clearer, anyhow good enough, so I finished off my work & go on to **Changli** tomorrow, that is two stations down the line & I will give this to the guard of the train to post. It has been so cold today; I was so cold on my hill my hands & wrists simply ached. Did I tell you about all the houses here, it was a sort of watering place for Europeans at **Tientsin** & all the houses have been destroyed. Jameson went off today & Roche of the same regiment has come, a much more lively chap. I'm writing now before going to bed with my long felt boots & lined Chinese coat on & this is April 10 & no signs of the hot weather yet, I suppose it will come with a rush. I've also got some cheroots to smoke, I sent a man into **Shan-hai-kuan**, but he brought me about no dak<sup>63</sup>; however perhaps I shall get two letters from you next mail. My mother said you were going down to your mother's for a couple of days. I expect in talking to old **Blanche** you forgot me. This letter is quite a respectable length. I picked a flower for you which I will send you when it is a bit pressed. I don't know the language of flowers, but this particular one means that I love and adore you more than ever, that you are a pretty sweet little girl & the dearest wife ever anyone had & darling I do really think that with my whole heart. Please, I want a photo of you & I want to be made love to. I'm rather pleased with myself today because my work is coming out well; if only it will keep fine; this cold snap ought to clear the air. Your mother sent me out a small photo of the side of the new house, it looks very pretty. Another of the Miss Ricketts at **Bangalore** has been married, do you remember the double wedding we went to. You must have quite forgotten what India is like. I can hear the sea roaring away as I write, it rather reminds me of the **Boulogne** beach; the waves break some distance out. It is too cold, much, for bathing yet, but about June it ought to be a rather nice; but the sea makes me sad & feel how far away we are from each other, but I am always thinking of you, dearest, my only consolation. I do miss you most terribly. There is some idea of our camping down here for the hot weather, but I still have lingering hopes that we may get away. I believe the peace negotiations are making good progress. I wish Li Hung Chang knew how I long to give you a good hug. Tell **Margaret & Enid** that there are a lot of shells on the shore here, but no seaweed & no crabs. I'm afraid on the Chatham course we shall only be able to get a few days leave at a time. You will have had so much of **London**, you won't care about going to theatres, so I will go up & you can mind the children, will that suit? Now sweetheart, it's 11 o'clock & I've got to be up at 6, as I'm more than 3 miles from the station. My own pet, heaps & heaps of kisses & fondest love, forever, Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

"Please give **Margaret, Enid & Violet** each one kiss.

"Please ask Margaret to give Enid & Violet each one kiss from Father.

"Please ask Enid to give Margaret & Violet each one kiss from Father.

"Please ask Violet to give Margaret & Enid each one kiss from Father.

That we they each get three kisses & poor Father is all by himself & gets none."

9<sup>th</sup> April, By the seaside, to Julia: "My dearest Mother, I came out from **Shan-hai-kuan** on the 6<sup>th</sup>, two

62 An organisation, arrangement, from Hindi via Kipling.

63 A Hindi word for "mail"; also used for a British colonial postal and passenger transport service in India.

stations down the line, had a longish day that day, as I had to go off & observe on a hill about 4 miles off. I slept in a carriage which was shunted onto the siding. Then on the 7<sup>th</sup> I came over to another hill close to the sea, but it was too hazy to see anything, so I sent for my things & came to the post, 100 men under Jameson of the 6<sup>th</sup> Jats. We are within 100 yards of the sea, so jolly & fresh. The coast is ugly, all low, except just this little hills here about 300 feet high. This place **Pei-ta-ho** was a kind of watering place for the Europeans at **Tientsin & Peking** & there are a lot of houses 50 or more, everyone with only the walls standing; all the woodwork taken away by the Boxers. Thanks for sending me the cover of my letter, which took so long to reach you, but our letters go by so many different ways & through so many different ways (*sic*) I'm afraid it is no use complaining. I'm so sorry, Mother dear, that you have been ill; I do wish you would see some good **London** doctor the next time you are passing through. None of those doctors round you are much use. I should fancy & even if the **London** Dr says you are all right, why it is worth paying £2.2 to do that. I know my torture pictures are horrible, but they are interesting all the same, and I promise not to hang them up anywhere. The enlarged fireplace in the spare room will be a great improvement, it always burnt well, but wanted coal being put on continually. If **Wiffs**<sup>64</sup> has leave to send in his application for leave, I expect he has got it all right by now. Yes, Chinese is very difficult, I have learnt how to be able to go about with an interpreter who only speaks Chinese, which is something. My knowledge of it may be useful; I think every officer ought to have been ordered to learn it as it is only about a dozen are doing so.

“This has been a very long separation from my wife & chicks. I don't grudge it as long as I am doing plenty of work, but now this has become only an army of occupation, the sooner I get away the better pleased I shall be; but most fellows here are hoping that the force remains here for the hot weather. I feel an awful distance away here. Your letter of Feb. 21. reaches me on April 7 a good six weeks. I have a room here in a Chinese house, a rather superior sort of hut, but not uncomfortable with my bed, table & chair. There is no dearth of doctors in **Peking**; I suppose owing to the fuss about South Africa, is the Govt. determined to do the thing properly so every other man you meet is a doctor & they have nothing to do.

“April 10. Much love to you all. I've been out all day at work as it was clear & go on tomorrow to **Changli**, two stations down the line. Ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

12<sup>th</sup> April, Changli, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I came in here yesterday by train, after sitting on a hill for two hours, but it was frightfully hazy, a regular gale & dust storm & now today the sun hasn't been able to get out, so I can't do any work. I am in a room in the railway station here, Captain Gilbert 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers is the only officer here, he seems a nice chap & last night we had a German over to dinner. Today I don't know what I shall do; the trains pass here at midday & I have a man coming out from **Shan-hai-kuan** who I do hope will bring me some letters from you.

“5 pm. Hurrah! Two letters from you, full of love & everything nice. I heard from Watts Jones mother too, thanking me for helping her son, & I've had to answer that. Renny-Tailour says that there is a confidential room that Count Waldersee goes back soon & the troops will be reduced. In the same room and is flying about here, so my hopes rise higher. Oh! I am longing and longing to be with you. I too would like to kiss you, not because I care for it myself, you know, but it is the sort of thing a girl expects one to do! I am really glad your mother will have the children, that is real good news, Ida & I'm awfully pleased; you don't say it is quite pukka, but tell your mother that I am delighted. That removes one great difficulty & makes it worthwhile your coming out even for a short time. Now with two letters before me, my pen can fly. Don't cry darling, I am so vexed with myself that I have been careless & not made my letters as long as I really feel. Oh! How I wish I could make you understand how you are the whole world to be, so just smile again please, you know I love & adore you & think you the best sweetest & prettiest little wife in the world. I assure (*you*) I don't feel like a bachelor & I long to have you in my arms again! I never have for one moment regretted being married, so don't be an ass & talk like that. I'll soon knock you into my ways don't you fear. Your idea of going into the country for the

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64 His brother Wilfred.

summer is a good one & then **London** afterwards; it seems to suit you all. Violet ought to be able to speak by now, mind & write & let me know. I'm sorry to hear about your teeth, don't have too much old put & spoil your pretty teeth. My dear you must have missed some of my letters, I know I wrote about mother not having the children. I am quite well now, thank you; I wish I had got ill enough to be invalided home to you. One good thing about getting to let us together is that I hear of **Enid** being ill & well again, all at one time. I miss you always, only more especially so when I'm ill. Yes, you dear, I wish I could have got you some jewellery, but I never could, however, I have hopes that when we meet we may have something in hand to spend in that line. I have already sent you photos of myself in khaki, but I want some of you please. All right, dear, I forgive you about the boots, I'm all right with two pair of black ones, but I prefer brown. I suppose I shall not be "very good" when we meet, in fact you may take it that I shall be just the opposite & worse than ever! Yes, I can - well here (*sic*) I went out for a walk & what I was going to write about I don't know. I wonder whether you will like the boxes of things. I'm afraid a great deal is rubbish & you won't understand a good deal. For instance you will find framed like a picture some Chinese writing that is in the Emperor's writing and presented it (*sic*) by him to one of the Princes. Mind you let me know what you like out of the things & what you don't like. No, my exam nor nothing else can keep me away from you a single day once I get the slightest chance of getting off. Apparently my travelling allowance is all right; anyhow no objections have come to it. You can tell the Gwynnes each week that I've sent my love & am very grateful to them for looking after you, so that I needn't trouble to hurry home to my horrid little wife, but can enjoy a great bachelor life out here! I probably shan't be back in **Peking** in time for the exam in Chinese so you will have to do without the reward. I know I shouldn't have passed anyhow. The reason why your letter came late this week & none last was because across it was stamped in French "mal dirigé" which in case you don't know means incorrectly addressed, but I've read over of the address again carefully & could only find that you had spelt British with two t's, perhaps that distressed the French mail man. If you like you may make my torture pictures a present (*some gift!*) to anyone you like and you can give anyone else anything you like. I've done quite a lot of writing today; but you are a dear sweet girl so I love you a bit extra; in fact if I only had a glass of port I could almost long to kiss you. You dear, I'm so sorry about **Margaret's** teeth, but I suppose it can't be helped. A German officer was brought in here who had fallen off his horse a mile or two out; he was taken in by train to **Shan-hai-kuan** Frightfully hurt about the head. There are two little dogs here, belong to the owner of this room, funny little chaps & very friendly, but they litter the floor with bones & work me up extra early growling.

"April 13. Dash it all, It is just as cloudy today, most annoying; however there is no help for it. How I wish you were here. There's plenty of room in my sleeping bag for two if very close! I wonder how you will like my habit of waking up at 6 o'clock every morning; It is rather a nuisance when one is by oneself, it makes the days so long. I'm now arranging to have your remittance sent to India by money order & then is to Cox. You've never yet sent me the full true & particular account of what interest we receive & watch your money is invested in. I wonder whether my boxes will get home all safe, mind you, there's hardly anything of real value outside those very heavy bronzes all in the one box. If I have much of this nearly solitary life, I shall quite get into my old habits of writing you long letters all about nothing. You see I'm in a nice little room at a nice table & nobody to interrupt. I don't know when the hot weather is coming on, no signs of it yet. About a fortnight ago I wrote to India ordering khaki & other things I wanted, I haven't ordered them before because I always thought we might go; & it has never come off. Now that I have ordered the things I have great hopes we may yet go back this hot weather. Sweetheart it will be very hot for you darling & I do hope you will come if I telegraph to you. I wrote & told Renny-Tailyour that if the force was reduced I thought I ought to be one of the first to go. I wish I could get this bit of work done quickly. It is still quite cuddly weather, I have the same things on my bed as I've had all through the winter. I can't be grateful enough for that sleeping bag, you were a perfect darling to send it; when it gets warmer it will be the last thing I shall discard, because it is light & it prevents any horrid draughts coming in; in fact should you come to the **Shan hills** with me, I shall insist on your using it or another like it. How I do look forward to our being together again, sweetheart. I expect you are looking sweetly pretty, but when do you intend giving me a son! If I wire

to you, I think I had better wire to your Father, because I can't wire to you % Cox, without using any number of words. I mean is there telegraphic address is Cox, Charing Cross, London, then I have to put in your name and "care", & if I only put in Ryder, they may send it to the wrong one. Whereas to Father I could address in 4 words at most. I can't expect any more mail just yet a while, but I am sending a man into **Shan-hai-kuan** today.

"2 pm. Down in the dumps. I was talking to a Russian officer who said that a German officer had just told him that they the Germans had received orders that none of their troops would leave before 1<sup>st</sup> August & that and then they would be reduced to 6,000 men from their present 20,000; and I asked General Reid who passed through whether he had any news about our going; but he said no. So, sweetheart, even if I write carefully about getting away, I get bad news next day; & then perhaps hear some shave the following day & so on, & think of nothing but when, oh! When shall I get away & see you again. I'm going out now to a hill about numeral 3 miles off, not because I can see anything, but just to pass the time.

"7 pm. I can do a bit of writing before dinner. I did an 8 mile walk this afternoon & thought of a new way of doing my triangulation, & so perhaps I may get away by the day after tomorrow. I'm quite by myself now & nothing to read, so you score, but I am rather hungry for dinner, so you won't get much of a letter; but I adore you all the same. My food & living cost rather more when I'm out like this because we run our mess in **Peking** very cheaply & very well, while here, sometimes I live by myself, sometimes I belong to a mess for a day or two. It was quite warm walking, but in the evening it is cold & I should like a fire but there is no bundobast for that in these rooms. I've got tremendously sunburnt the last fortnight. I shall soon be wanting to wear a topi.

"April 14. I was out all the morning till 2; when I got back I found letters, no English mail though. I heard from Renny-Tailyour; he says "Private & confidential" I hear that General Barrow is not going away (he was going to India to take up some appointment there). All the generals had a meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> & they were unanimous that we should withdraw a large portion of the troops & wires to this effect were sent home, "so we shall probably be off by August." So this is something; if we could only get off by then for certain that would be something. This news is anyhow pretty certain to be true & isn't the ordinary camp talk. I think even it would be worthwhile your coming out. If you come out I shall probably not go to Burma but stay in **Bangalore** to finish up the maps; I then would go home with you in March for the Chatham course & take my 3 months privilege leave, after the course; but if you didn't come out, I should try for my privilege leave before the courts & so be home say by 15<sup>th</sup> of January. If we are off in August, that means I should be in India by the end of August. Now of course, darling, it will be beastly hot for you coming out & my dear wife's health is more important than my selfish wish to have you with me, but oh! dear I do long for you & there's no mistake about that. I know everyone will say; how foolish to go out when your husband is coming home in 5 months; but 5 months is a long long time to be separated unnecessarily. I've finished my work here at least I shall this evening. It was quite a nice fine day, & go on to the next station **An-shan** tomorrow; hope with luck to get to **Lan chou** the following day. Much love my very dearest. I'm going to close this now. Heaps & heaps of kisses to yourself & the chicks, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

13<sup>th</sup> April, China Field Force, to Julia: "My dearest mother, your last letter dated Feb. 28 reached me yesterday. I hope you are getting better, under your strict diet, and the spring coming on will set you up. Things here look rather more like a move, general rumours that at any rate the troops will be reduced & I hope I may be considered superfluous. As for the Empress Dowager of China, she is practically the absolute ruler of China & one can hardly expect her to punish herself. Prince Tuan is to be banished. You see, it of course would be quite easy to punish China more heavily, but it would lead to the partition of the country & that is exactly what we don't want, although the French & Russians would. I am just now at **Changli**, a railway station, waiting by no means patiently for clearer weather & I don't know when I shall get back to Peking. There is a small post at each station here, a company of the 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers under Capt Gilbert, but most stations have a native officer in charge. A German officer was brought in yesterday, his horse had fallen in with him & his head was badly hurt; so we sent him into

**Shan-hai-kuan** by the train. The two trains cross here, up & down, so for about half an hour there is quite an excitement; for the rest of the day there is nothing going on. There are some high rocky hills a couple of miles off, quite bare & ugly, but a good many fruit trees in blossom at the bottom. The sea is about 10 miles off, one can't see it, but I can just see some sand hills. I'm in a room in the station; it was the station master's I think. I thought I should have got back to Peking by the end of the month, but I don't see now how I can; so I shall miss the exam in Chinese, I couldn't have passed though; I've been able to do no book reading, only talking while I've been out. I heard from Watts Jones' mother. The letter, although quite correctly addressed went off to South Africa; poor woman, she even in January, had hopes of her son being still alive. I can't help thinking that anyone almost except he, would have stopped in time that he was obstinate to a degree & would not listen to the missionaries who implored him not to go on; but I couldn't tell his mother that. My Chinese teacher has gone off into the country to see his teacher whom he hasn't seen for five years but who lives near here. The Chinese seem to take to the railway like anything, crowds of them travel by every train in open trucks. I don't think there is any doubt about my being done for the Chatham Course next year; I shall be glad to get the exams for promotion over. While I am there I shall only be able to get leave for a few days at a time. I don't know when mails go from **Tientsin**, so I just sent off a letter every few days. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

15<sup>th</sup> April, **Changli**, to Ida: "My very own dearest, All my things are packed & I have nothing to do for an hour, so I've just kept out my writing things & can get on a bit with my letter to you. Today there is a strong wind blowing which has filled the air with dust, so I know I shan't be able to see anything, but one never knows, the wind changes so often here. The more I think of it, the more do I think it worth your while coming out to me; suppose my leave was refused, or supposing for any reason the Chatham Course was again postponed. I wish I was with you to help you getting things, but generally speaking as you will almost certainly be coming out for only six or eight months, don't get too much. You must have nice things though, all the same. For the voyage out you will have the ship pretty empty & might get a cabin to yourself. You see I don't know what you've got in the way of dresses & clothes generally; only to leave your measure(*ments*) behind at a good dressmaker & also for boots & shoes. Don't take your passage to have you here definitely that I expect you to be in India by a certain date; then take your passage to arrive in India about 10 days or a fortnight later than I do, taking care to write to me % Surveyor General, **Calcutta**, the name of your steamer & the date of your reaching **Bombay**. Every alternate steamer you have to change at **Aden**, so the one that comes straight through is the best. Come first class & as I am not with you I recommend you're going round by sea & not across to **Marseilles**; if however you happened to know of anyone going across France you might go that way, but not unless. You like the sea & the railway journey is not comfortable, costs altogether about five pounds more & requires some bundobast about looking after yourself & luggage. Should you come out that way though take a sleeping berth ticket on the train. You ought to have with you £10 in gold; I should bring of this £1 in half crowns & shillings, £1 in half sovereigns & £8 in sovereigns. As I will meet you at **Bombay** with plenty of money, you needn't bother about that. By the bye in buying your ticket see that you get a railway ticket to **Bangalore**, or if they won't give you that, then to **Madras**, they used to give it free trapped in with the ticket but may have altered their rules. Have your name painted on all boxes, and don't forget to get all the labels for "cabin", "wanted on the voyage"; this latter you can get every 4 days or so; so it is much more comfortable not to have too much in the cabin with you.

"Get yourself a golf bag & golf sticks, part, lofter, clique or cleak, I think you spell it the last way, & driver; the latter, get a ladies & not too long, then get yourself a bicycle; send that out with your heavy boxes at least a fortnight before you start, three weeks if possible; taking them with you & paying over weight costs just 10 times the amount, & then address them to % Grindlay, Groome & Co, tell him what is inside & ask him to send (*them*) by goods train to Bangalore, telling him to send the railway receipt to officer in charge, 21 Party, Survey of India & Bangalore, for him to take delivery. We will take a house unless the yard in **Bangalore** for a really short time. I will send you all the money I can, but I have already written to Cox to let you overdraw £200 if necessary; I will be sending money home regularly but some of it mightn't arrive till after you wanted it. I'm so sorry the flower I had pressed for

you, has fallen out of the book I put it in.

“I love to plan all this, even if it does come to nothing, but two ladybirds sat on my hand yesterday so I think it will be all right. You see you will get this letter early in June & so might be starting in two months. You mustn't expect me to be looking very smart, my dear, I will do my best to get rigged up with new clothes in India, but I shall not have much time & it will be very hot. I will do all I can to make your journey up to Bangalore comfortable, once they're of course it will not be hot. Now, sweetheart I must stop for a bit.

“**Anshan**<sup>65</sup>, April 15. I came out here by the train, got here at 1 o'clock & then went up my little hill till 3; Was jolly hungry when I got back, had egg sandwiches, sardines & tea then talked for an hour with my teacher, went out for a stroll & here I am at 6 o'clock. Nothing to do, nothing to read & rather tired with my luck. I shall finish my work here tomorrow & go on by train to the next station, **Shihmen**, Where I see another little hill waiting for me; then I get into **Lemchou** the next day. I've just started eating a pear, to keep off the pangs of hunger; these outings improve my figure, because I only eat about half as much as I do at **Peking**. These pears are rather good, very juicy but quite tasteless, I must have another. I'm in rather a dirty Chinese room today, but I don't think of my surroundings when I am writing to you; thinking of you & a little about my pear & the nice smoke I shall have after. We shall be able to do ourselves very comfortably, camping in the **Shan** hills; now I hope nothing will happen to prevent (*it*), I'm afraid I must give up the idea of having a boy! I don't think I can do better than have charge of 21 Party; you can with me, & while over in Burma I get altogether Rs250 a month more, which is something; & it's more interesting work to me than a Forest Party like 19. What it comes to though is this; no babies & 21 Party, or 19 Party & babies & I'm afraid you will prefer the latter. You darling, it would be rather nice to have a boy or two, but I think we've enough daughters. Now tell me what you think, but you never answer these questions. It is quite simple, do you want a son or do you not? My mother said in her last, when I thanked her for a parcel she had sent out, that the knife, a little one, all metal, you know the sort, was one which she thought you had put in; If so, here's a kiss, because it is so useful, just the best size & the sort. The only useful addition to it would have been a tin opener.

“After dinner & very sleepy, in fact I'm going to bed just as soon as I possibly can. My dinner consisted of bully beef, fried eggs & rice, washed down with beer; simple fare, my dear, simple fare. This is quite the warmest evening we've had. I'm sitting with the door of my room open. I'm getting into my old camp ways of being dead fagged & going to bed early, but mind you I'm awake every morning at 6 or earlier. Goodnight, sweetheart.

“April 17. I had a headache yesterday & today, a bit of sun, anyhow I've wired for my helmet. I came here yesterday & have a room at the station & most of my meals at the little mess of 3 fellows of the 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers near by. The latest is again from Renny-Tailyour, he says that all the generals are unanimous that the forces should be reduced about the 15<sup>th</sup> June & have wired home for instructions. Then there is a very detailed rumour about the brigade that is to be left behind to consist of the 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, 4<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas, 20<sup>th</sup> P. I. & 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers; so it all looks very promising & I'm feeling very cheerful, only I've just found out an idiotic mistake I made in my computations that will give me about 6 hours work to correct. I find, my dear, that I'm not half so good at mathematics as I used to be, which rather worries me. I want a holiday. I've withdrawn my name from the Chinese exam, but we'll go up just before we leave. May be the Russians or somebody will refuse to withdraw & then we won't, but still I now have great hopes. You darling, how lovely it will be being together again, & I'll try my hardest to make up for you having to leave the dear children, but it won't be for long, as we shall be home again in March. I am so glad your mother will have them. The mail is late this week, as the following one reaches **Shanghai** today. I was out most of today on a hill & had no lunch which did my head good I think. How delighted I shall be when I am really started. Renny Taylor said he was coming down to meet me at **Tongshan**; & he will probably bring the latest news. Now goodnight my darling, & God

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65 Close to Tientsin (Tianjin).

bless you.

“April 18. Had a very good morning's work & so I'm pleased with things. Two more ladybirds sat on me yesterday, so we must be on the move. I don't think I shall get to **Peking** for another three weeks or so. I'm in no hurry. My headache has gone. Supposing we leave in June, the last pay I would be able to send you home from here will be May's that is March, April & May's, perhaps £180. Then when I get to India I will send home June's & we will have July's to start on. What are you arranging about paying for the children? I should very much prefer paying for them but leave you to arrange that with your mother. Anyhow, whatever the bundobast is, let it be quite clear so that we know when to pay the money. Unless there is some good day school near, they ought to have a governess. I had a very nice letter from Mowbray Thomson in answer to one I wrote about **Aunt Mary**<sup>66</sup> having the children. I said I thought it would tie her down too much & he said she must go to South France for the winter. He said, “she might take the children with her”; but of course that would never do. Anyhow as your mother is going to have them, it is all settled nicely. Your Father & Mother ought to be very comfortable on their £2,000 a year; & they will be able to give the boys each an allowance. One of these days I'm going to treat myself to a good writing case; big with a lock & key. I think all the time about your coming out sweetheart. My surveyor told me he heard yesterday from a friend, a clerk in the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade office at **Tientsin**, that the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade is to be broken up & goes back to India; that all points in the same way. Hurrah! Hurrah! I quite expect to send you off my first telegram in a fortnight or so. I don't know how I shall manage to write to meet you at **Aden**, but I will meet you myself at **Bombay** which will be better still. I am writing by this mail to Grindlay to forward my letters to % Surveyor General, Calcutta; as she will know when we leave China & will send them on or keep them as we instruct him. The hope of seeing you so soon darling, cheers me tremendously & I can write away all day, only I have a good deal of work to do. When I'm in **Bangalore** I shall have a lot to do to, but any computations I will do at home with you along side to help. The wind has got up & is blowing up the sand so that one can hardly see any distance. All south of here is flat down to the sea, 20 or 30 miles off. There is a sandy river just alongside with a huge great railway bridge across it. Luckily the Boxers didn't touch it. If we leave about the middle of June, we should reach **Calcutta** early in July & if you arrived about the middle of July, that would be all right. It is just a fluke what sort of for each you worli (?) have down the Red Sea, it all depends on the direction of the wind. Across to **Bombay** you will have the monsoon behind you, which is better than having it straight ahead. If you could arrange to stay your last fortnight or so with your mother it would be convenient for packing &c. & your Father is always very good about going to see one off. Sweetheart, I look forward to our meeting & being together again; it will be simply lovely. I believe it is practically settled we get two medals, one a British one, the other an eight pointed star, an international one; each point representing the eight nations. Now I look forward to a very long time together. I have had my wish & been on service & now my turn won't come again for a long time. We will go home for the Chatham Course & then have three month's privilege leave after it; then we will come out for 3 years & go home then for two years furlough; the first three months being privilege leave on full pay. That is my nice little program. God bless you, darling. Tell the chicks you must come out to bring Father home. I'm sure poor dear **Margaret** will be very unhappy and a bit; darling I feel a brute making you leave the children, but I do want you so badly. Fondest love & heaps of kisses, for ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

18<sup>th</sup> April, Lanchou, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I feel very much on the writing track, although I sent you off a letter today, but I have been doing a lot of work this afternoon & want a little talk with you. Renny-Tailyour leave speaking on the 21<sup>st</sup> to come round here & so he will reach **Tongshan**<sup>67</sup> on the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>. He is such a nice chap, Ida, one of the nicest I've met. I don't know whether we shall go out with the small columns going from **Tongshan** towards **Peking**; I think very likely. Anyhow I shall get the latest news from him. The general talk is all about moving & who is going &c. The Survey Party will certainly leave when there is a general reduction, because we could do so little

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<sup>66</sup> Mary Ironside Money, 1835-1903, sister to Julia who was married to Mowbray Thompson.

<sup>67</sup> Now called Tangshan

work in the rains. Dear heart, what fun we shall have together; you mustn't (*mind*) my sitting & just enjoying looking at you, while you. I hope you will make love to me, please; I've had nobody to love me so long. I just pray the Russians will not make themselves objectionable & refuse to go; anyhow they will probably try & stop on in Manchuria. It has been more or less cloudy all day & much less hot; not that it is really hot yet, but one perspires going uphill. I have no envelopes so shall have to make some myself. I got a **Shanghai** paper of the 10<sup>th</sup> April today, that is the day the mail ought to have been there, but it is the week for the French mail & that is always late. I'm feeling so happy, but perhaps your letters will be short in answer to mine, which may also have been short & not loving. You darling, I do love you. You will have to look after me a bit & polish me up, because I've been so long roughing it. I can't help being a bit jungly. I shall probably be working right up to the end of our stay here to get everything surveyed that we can. General Gaselee has suddenly got very keen on survey. Fancy Sir E. Elles has been made military member of Council in India, great promotion. He is next boss to the Commander in Chief & I expect he will be that some day; a good thing for his sons, he has two out here, both attached, one to the sappers & one to 24<sup>th</sup> P.I. quite out of their turn. Bless me it's 7 o'clock. I must dress the dinner.

"19<sup>th</sup>. I came out to this place by the morning train, then went up my hill about 2 miles off, quite satisfied with what I could see, got back at 2 & had some lunch, worked up my angles a bit & here I am in a little room in the railway station. I rather like this sort of work; no one to bother me & I can write you long letters. When I get to **Tongshan** & meet Renny-Tailyour you won't get so much. Several fellows came down from **Peking** in the train; all the same story, that the proposals for reducing the forces had been sent in, some day (*say*) 6 regiments of ours will remain, some 4, but that will make no difference to my going. It was really quite hot today & I'm sitting in my shirt sleeves now. I had hoped a mail might come in by the train I came out by, but no luck. (??) tomorrow morning I have to go up a hill 2 miles off & then come back to catch the train. I rather want to catch a train load of empty goods wagons that generally goes through in the mornings. My little room is only about 8 ft. either way, has whitewashed walls, just room for my bed, table & chair. I feel so light-hearted just these last few days at the thought of seeing your dear pretty face again; but perhaps you will refuse to come; that would be a blow, but still if you decided not to come, I should have to look pleasant but oh! Ida, I do want you so very very much. All these fellows in the train said it was getting very hot in **Peking** & was much cooler here, that is because one is nearer the sea. I have nothing to read, but I can pass the time all right writing to you, doing Chinese & working out my computations.

"5 o'clock. I've just had an hour's talking Chinese & then Col. Cooke Collis (?) & Seddon of the 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers rode out from **Lanchou** to inspect the post; they only stayed 10 minutes or so. It has turned quite cold & cloudy; I hope this means clear weather tomorrow. I can do a certain amount of talking in Chinese now; anyhow I can get on with my fellow who doesn't understand any English.

"After dinner. Chicken, potatoes & omelet; a certain similarity about all my chaps cooking; but he makes an omelet which I believe you would rather like. I wish you were here sweetheart. I was woken very early this morning so I am rather tired & I have to be up at 5.30 Tomorrow. I had a wire from Renny-Tailyour just now; he said he would arrive at **Tongshan** on the 23<sup>rd</sup> & that's the column going out would not leave before the 26<sup>th</sup>; so I shall have time to bring my work up to there all right. Mind you put on a pretty chemise the morning you arrive in **Bombay**. I wonder whether the rules are still in force that going to the plague rules no one can go off to the ships to meet passengers; so I have to wait for you on the wharf. You dear sweet darling how I long to give you a good hug; don't be silly and object to being kissed when we meet. I rather wish now you hadn't invested so much as £400; we should have felt richer if we had had more money lying loose to spend. Perhaps it is all for the best we must save a bit for our three girls to give them a good time, but still I want you to come out comfortably & with nice dresses &c. I reckon on your starting about the beginning of July, but this is counting our chickens before they are hatched with a vengeance. You know you must bring out a bike; how I should love to ride with you, or do anything with you; sit & look at you, & hear you talk. I shan't quite believe you're there for some time. Now sweetheart, goodnight, I must be off to my lonely little

bit, quite irrespective of anything else! It is so jolly talking & making love to you in bed.

“April 20. You see I have had an accident, upset a glass of water this morning over part of this & over a letter I had written to my mother. Just had breakfast & I have an hour before my train comes. I am going back one more station to take two angles, but have only an hour or so there before the train comes in which I want to catch passing through here & **Lanchou** & onto **Leichuang** (?). I sleep now in my sleeping bag & one blanket, as the weather gets warmer I feel sleepier in the mornings & not so desirous to get out early relief nature (1 thing). When I write, I do love you, sweetheart; you see you must read it both ways. I do love you & I too love you; it's so much nicer to say it than to write it; but you never write it or say it to me. Would you do this for me, write or go to Cox & ask them whether they paid £100 to Major Renny-Tailyour's account. I sent home two drafts in the same letter, one rather more than £100 to be paid with my account, the other £100 to be paid with Renny-Tailyour's account. They acknowledge the receipt of them & said “they would be disposed of as directed,” about Renny-Tailyour some time ago said Cox had not informed him that the money had been paid into his account. I dare say it is all right. I sent the drafts home in October or November & my draft was either £113.18.1 or £119.18.1 or some sum like that. This outing of mine has been useful in preventing me from spending any more money buying things; so now I think I've got well on to the right side of things; there is only one sum now of about Rs700 which I'm not quite certain I may have to pay or not. Will you send or take this letter to Cox. I want to sell Maison Virot 10 £1 shares & also don't you think it would be a good thing to get rid of the 10 Coromandel shares. They are only a nuisance & may bust up again. I don't know what that £7 income tax to be recovered that you talk about, as long as you got it, all the better. Why I want to know about exactly what our money is invested in, the amount of interest & when it is paid, is that it is now quite a substantial amount. Interest is generally paid twice a year, but sometimes four times; for instance your War Loan money might have interest 4 times. Look here, this is what I want, Guinness £100 share interest £12 in say Jan, £7 in June. Russians (exact amount) amount of interest when paid. War Loan, what is the amount you hold, amount paid, interest & dates. Midland Railway, same as above & what is the exact name.

“April 21. I've observed at my hill this morning, worked at computations & then took the train in here, **Tongshan**. I'm staying in the same bungalow I was in before. It turned quite cold today & I have a fire in my room. A mail came in today, so I shall get mine tomorrow. There has been a fight near **Shan-hai-kuan**, 1 officer killed & one wounded of ours. Count von Walderssee's headquarters have been burnt down & his chief of the staff burnt to death & a German captain, whom I knew, shot coming back from the Summer Palace to Peking; so things are getting a bit exciting again. I had no lunch, only a cup of tea when I got a very small dinner, so I'm feeling rather far away. Pottinger who lives in this house has gone off somewhere for 4 days. I feel tired darling, but I love & adore you more than ever, goodnight.

“24<sup>th</sup> April. You have been neglected. I have been very busy preparing to go out, there is a hitch about the 80 infantry who are to go with me. Renny Taylor arrived yesterday & we've moved down to a sort of dak bungalow near the station. He had no news about a move, so I'm afraid I was happy too soon. Yesterday I got your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> & today of the 15<sup>th</sup>. My letters had been late & short. Darling, I'm so distressed that my letters should have been short & not loving. God only knows how I love & adore you. When I am downhearted I feel so miserable I can't write. You wrote me a jolly long letter though on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Don't you fear, no more exploring or anything of the sort for me. Just as soon as I can we shall be together & I am just longing for the time. Sweetheart, you couldn't come out here, the country isn't really settled down enough. There are no signs of our being allowed leave from here either. The only definite news is that the Imperial Service troops are going back. If I go out with this Survey column I shall be out about a month & that will about finish the surveying around here. We shall probably be 5 officers, 80 cavalry & 80 infantry, & be able to send letters in now & again; but darling, if my letters are short, please, please don't think I don't love you or anything silly like that, you little goose, you know you're all the world to me & I care for nothing & nobody else. You will be just as pretty as ever, when we met, prettier if possible. Now I am going to send you some photos; two copies

of 3 are of Renny-Tailyour & myself & the two others are of Rigby, myself & Norie, in that order from the left; we are all spinning tops in the courtyard of our house. We none of us look very beautiful but still I thought you would like them. If you can spare 1 copy, send them on to my mother, but I have said nothing to her about them, so you needn't if you don't want to. Wingate took them with his snap camera & we didn't know we were being taken. If you were here I'd soon kiss these rotten ideas out of your pretty head about my not loving you sweetheart. I promise you faithfully that you will join me on the very first opportunity. Miss Hume who came out has been kept at **Tientsin** & forbidden to go up to **Peking**, while he is kept there & everybody laughs. I don't want either you or me to be jeered at. I'm afraid my room gets very untidy with maps, papers &c. I told Renny-Tailyour you would give me a dressing down if you saw it, & he said "She would." No I didn't meet the Phillimore's out here; I don't know which they are. I met one in the navy (?) some years ago, he must be 35 or more now. Please, dear, I can't help it if my letters are not regular; the post play all sorts of games, but I write as much as I can, darling, only, sweetheart, this long separation is very saddening. I hope for a good time coming. I really think **Wiffs** is going home to propose, so if he is in love, you must excuse him.

"I dined last night at the mess of the 20<sup>th</sup> P.I. There were only about 1/2 a dozen fellows as about half the regiment is scattered along the railway stations. I keep my moustache cut to its old length; I won't experiment till I am away on the column. My face is much too fat, I loathe the sight of myself & can't think how you can love me. Now sweetheart, I must go & post this. Darling I worship & adore you & love you & long for you. You are the sweetest, prettiest, dearest little wife man ever had. God bless you & keep you. My fondest love, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

"Kiss my dear chicks for me & keep many for yourself."

19<sup>th</sup> April, to Julia: "My dearest Mother, I've been moving about so that I forget where I sent off my last letter from, probably from **Changli**. Well I've been living at the different ~~<sup>68</sup> stations along the line & going up the hills near, none high, so I've had very easy work, but plenty of it. I expect to get in to **Tongshan** tomorrow or the day after & have to arrange for the surveying of the country between there & **Peking**. I may go out with a small column, or not, I don't know. All the talk now is about the moving, the breaking up of the forces. I believe all the generals out here are agreed to reduce numbers about the 15<sup>th</sup> June, & are referred home to their Govts. It has turned quite hot in the sun, so I have wired for my helmet & hope to get it tomorrow; but still it shews what a much better climate it is than India as I have been wearing a fur cap till now. It is cooler here near the coast than in **Peking**. The general idea is that one brigade will remain behind & it will probably be a pretty good one, 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, 4<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas, 20<sup>th</sup> P.I. & 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers. They may have a little trouble with robbers, but nothing worth mentioning. There is a band of robbers about, ~~ along (?) 30 miles north of ~~ ~~ ~~ catch them & they know ~~ ~~ ~~. In the meantime they rob & the Chinese officials can do nothing and they have ~~ troops now. This little station ~~ guard ~~ men, the jemadar<sup>69</sup> in command has just ~~ ~~ alarm to have the men in their places in case of a night attack; as a telegram has just ~~ ~~ robbers are disguised as Chinese soldiers ~~ ~~ to cross the line somewhere near here. My Chinese servant is learning gradually, his work, he can ~~ cook (?) very little; however it is enough for me. I get rather tired though of chicken & eggs & rice ~~ ~~ at several places I've found small (?) officers messes (?) going & joined them. The hospital ships have been fitted up with extraordinary luxuries for natives; spring beds. The men when they saw them thought there's been some mistake. The sahibs beds have been put on board by mistake & so slept under them; hot baths & a lot of other things that ordinary sepoy & followers had never seen before. This is all the result of the the row about the hospitals in South Africa. It is a curious sight to see the trains passing through with troops of every nation imaginable. I think the discipline of the Russian troops is best, the men are quiet, respectful & well behaved. The French are worst & don't care a bit for their officers. Their great sport is to throw stones at our sentries as the train passes by & shout out "English coolie" at them. Some Sikhs gave them something to remember two days ago; 4 Sikhs knocked about 1/2 a dozen French men down for calling

68 This letter suffered from spillage of shaving water and is difficult to read in places.

69 A native junior officer belonging to a locally raised regiment serving as mercenaries in India.

them coolies. There was a very funny scene two stations up the line; a German sergeant wanted to take possession of a house in the station; the sabadas (?) made signs that he couldn't have it, however the German shoved him on one side. The subadas then called on a British corporal, a telegraphist. This man came along rolling up his sleeves & said in English to the German, "Look here, don't you go for to touch that man, he's an officer. If you want to hit anybody, just hit me." Then the German retired. I believe we are to get an International Star, eight pointed to represent the eight nations allied. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

23<sup>rd</sup> April, Tongshan, to Julia: "My dearest mother, I apologise for the state of my other letter. I upset my shaving water over it. I have had to give up studying Chinese, no time but do a fair amount of talking. I have got to the state that I can get along, get anything I want & ask any ordinary questions, but that isn't much considering I have been working hard at it for some months. This place is quite a young Birmingham. I can see three tall chimneys from where I sit, (?) all working away. Everybody is getting more & more ragged. No one at the end of last summer expected to be here another summer! I have written for the khaki which ought to be here by the time I get back, but boots I am very badly off for; however I may get something from **Tientsin**. I hate the ordinary ammunition boots. They are much too heavy, especially for the hot weather. What I like best if (?) I've done a good deal of walking the last 2 or 3 years are Oxford shoes with strong soles & spats. Irrespective of these expeditions, I've done 4,000 miles, excluding journeys in boats, which would add another 2,000 & I doubt if I rode 200 miles of it. The Germans have been very unlucky losing both Gen Swartzhof & Count von Yorck. They were quite two of the most rising (?) men, & both have died from accidental causes.

"24<sup>th</sup>. Yesterday & today I received two mails of March 8 & 15. I am so glad you are better mother dear. My letters seem to have been much delayed, that was when the sea was frozen off the coast here. I may be kept waiting here as there is a difficulty about my infantry escort owing to the disturbed state of the country near **Shan-hai-kuan**. The brigade there can't spare me 80 men. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder."

26<sup>th</sup> April, Tongshan, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, I am very tired & it's 10.00 pm, but I must get on with my letter a bit. I was out from 7 to 4 today, went out by train, then walked 6 miles to a hill, sat on the top for 4 hours, but did very little work owing to the mist & then came back; then I had a lot of work to do. Major Turner, a very nice chap is to command the column, 80 Jodhpur Lancers & 80 of the 28<sup>th</sup> Madras. He probably start the day after tomorrow & I think we shall be out a month, but I shall be able to get letters sent in. A letter goes this mail to India sending about £74 from there to Cox. It will arrive about a week after this; it is very late, but you will get another £60 or so some 10 days after. Yesterday there was quite a lot of rain, & the frogs are shouting tonight; as also is an awful donkey close by. I'm afraid I shall not get another mail before I start. I expect to be very hard worked while I am out, dearest, so please don't think I don't love you if my letters are short; it is such hard lines (?) 3 months afterwards to be told I love you, when you know quite well I adore you. I'm feeling very well, but want you very very much. There is no news about the force being broken up. I'm afraid we shall wait till August now, but I hope on. Goodnight my sweetheart.

"28<sup>th</sup>. Dear pet, I've been so busy. We start tomorrow as follows, Major Turner in command with 80 Jodhpur Lancers, Capt Domenchetti & 80 28<sup>th</sup> Madras N. I., myself & a doctor, Bryson I think his name. The whole thing will last about 6 weeks, but as we get near **Lanchou** I shall probably leave them & come in. It will be a jolly being out, the time passes more quickly, but oh! my own darling how I do long for you. We have arranged a pretty good bundobast for having the letters sent out about every 4 days, so I shall be able to write fairly often, but I may miss mails, then you will get two letters next week. Your next remittance may be a bit delayed, because there is some alteration which Renny-Tailyour will see to when he get backs to **Peking**, but I have signed pay bills for this month & next; anyhow £74 or so went off last mail, only via India, so it will be a week longer. I'm afraid I've kept you a bit short the last few months, but it is all right now, as I am well on the right side of everything now. I have just heard that I have got the Rs400 I was doubtful about. It was very lucky that we were able to draw money here, because our pay bills are wandering about in India & nobody will have anything to

do with them, but as we are allowed sa?? month to draw an advance equal to our pay it doesn't matter. It is most horribly hazy now, like hot weather, such a nuisance for my work. There is absolutely no news here about any moves, Renny-Tailyour will let me know when we get back. You dear old girlie, write me as long & as lovingly as you can; loving letters get loving letters in return. We must both remember that. There is no regular daily for the posting of English letters; so that I can't help missing a mail now and again, but my whole heart & all my thoughts are always of you. Dearest I prayed for a happy meeting soon. You don't really think you miss me more than I miss you, sweetheart. You at least have the children with you & have more to distract your thoughts that I have. I just feel miserable without you & long for the days to pass by. Should you come out to be, we shall be in **Bangalore**, we (*will*) not go out to Burma, because I should have to leave again so soon for the Chatham Course. I think now things look as if we should leave in August; we shall have done all these surveying we can do before then. So there would be no use our staying on. It is so much warmer now. I sleep with windows open, just in my sleeping bag & without blankets. I hear the balloon section is going back to England & the Imperial service fanting (??) in about a month but it is all talk. Now I must do some more work, darling.

“6 o'clock. I've arranged everything, but I am dining over at the mess. I'd much sooner be here writing to you. I just had a letter from a cousin **Robbie Money**<sup>70</sup>, a civil engineer, arrived at **Tientsin** & wondering whether we could meet, however as I'm going of tomorrow we can't. You darling, I wonder whether you are thinking of me, write & cheer me up, I'm feeling down in the mouth. How I should love to be with you, I feel at times rather worn out with constant work away from you. I should love to sit & talk with you now. I hate getting no news, even wild reports that we are going, which turn out to be untrue are something; I'm feeling the reaction after being so cock-a-hoop a few days ago; then I know that when I write dismally now, about 3 months hence I shall get yours dismal in answer. I wonder how our three little girls are. Give them each a kiss & tell them Father wishes he could come home & gives them a kiss himself; but much more do I wish I could give you a kiss myself, sweetheart & lots of them. I am constantly interrupted, Major Turner came in, he is a very nice chap indeed; then one of my surveyors came in about some work I had nearly finished. My envelopes, however, now I have some new ones. It is a good deal clearer this evening. We shall only two short marches & halt a good deal to survey, but holds won't mean halts for me, but I shall have to to be of climbing some hill. I'll start is at 7, so I've must be up at 5.30. There is always a delay in getting off. Now goodbye & God bless you, my dear little sweetheart, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

28<sup>th</sup> April, China Field Force, via Hong Kong, to Julia: "My dearest mother, We start out tomorrow, so I must write this today. I think we shall be able to send in & get out letters fairly often, but not regularly, so you must not mind if a mail or two goes by without a letter. I shall also have a lot of very hard work, so I shall not have much time to spare. Major Turner of the 2<sup>nd</sup> B.L. is in command, with 80 Jodhpur Lancers, 80 of the 28<sup>th</sup> Madras N.I. under Capt Domenichetti & I believe a doctor is coming too. We shall be out from a month to 6 weeks as we have to survey completely all the country between here & the **Great Wall**. It ought to be a very jolly trip, but it is rapidly getting hot & by the end I shall have had about enough. We do short marches & halt a good deal, as the only object of this column is surveying & we don't expect any rows, but still near the **Great Wall** we have to be careful, as there are known to be bands of robbers outside, pretty well armed. The weather has now turned very hazy, I can't see 5 miles today. We had rain 3 days ago & that they it was clear enough. I want clear whether badly otherwise we may be delayed a lot, but the hot weather has I think fairly well begun, not that it is really hot yet. I have heard no news for some days about any move homewards. I believe though that it is settled the two regiments of Imperial Service Infantry go, the Ulwar<sup>71</sup> & Bikaner<sup>72</sup>; the 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs come up from **Shanghai** which is a good thing as they are a fine regiment & will impress the foreigners a bit. I wish they would send the 4th Gurkhas up too. For some reason it was a good thing to have sent

70 Either his mother's first cousin Robert Cotton Money, Major General Bengal Civil Service 1835-1903 or more likely his son Colonel Robert Cotton Money 1861-1954.

71 Now Alwar in Rajasthan.

72 Also in Rajasthan.

regiments from all over India as was done, but we ought also to show our best. Anything is better than sticking in **Peking**. I believe we go out to see Summer Palace for the rains, it will be bad out there; anyhow it is healthy & not smelly. I wonder whether the modern tin soldier wears khaki, I suppose he does with a felt hat & all complete. Our old fellows would be quite out of date now. Now I have to go off to see about the men's rations, transport &c. Much love to you all & I hope you are really feeling better. Ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

29<sup>th</sup> April, China Field Force, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, I will try & write you a little every day so as to have a letter ready to send in when there is a chance. We started at 7 this morning & came straight across the plain for 8 miles to this large village, then we had to hunt about for places to billet the men & got a good house for ourselves, then had lunch, then shaved & at 3 o'clock I'm going off to a hill in the plain two miles off, but I know I shall see nothing. It is very hazy & now a strong wind is blowing up the dust. It was very jolly in the morning, now it is rather hot. We are five in the mess, Major Turner, Capt. Domenichetti, Captain Bryson (IMS), myself & one of the Jodhpur Lancer officers Aklinsinghi, a nephew of the Maharajah, rather a nice youth. Dash this hazy weather, it is a nuisance, it means double the amount of work to me and about 4 times the bother. I think we shall have letters sent out about 4 days hence, but that won't bring letters from you, I'm afraid, because it is the French mail and that is always late. I feel very sleepy, so this must do for the present.

"30<sup>th</sup>. Yesterday evening Turner walked off to my little hill, about 2½ miles off. At first I could see nothing, then I just saw the faint outline of a hill looming out of the haze, though it was only 10 miles off, however it's enabled me to come on here today to **Teng-jen-hsien**, a very short march, only 6 miles & we were in soon after 8; however I have had no time to myself till now, nearly 3 o'clock. We were up at 5. I know my letters are going to be stupid, darling, but it is getting hot & I have no news. I should feel more cheerful if it was to get clearer, I should have even less time to myself. The fellows out on the column are all nice enough, especially Turner, but oh! how very weary I am for you, darling; I never can feel that anyone can be the dear companion you are to me. I have taken to your belt as three buttons came off today, braces, buttons. I am in a sort of grain granary, so perhaps the rats will bother tonight. I have to go off to a hill tomorrow about 6 miles off, so I shall be out most of the day, then we move on the next day.

"May 2. I had a hard day yesterday, but most fortunately I saw the hills I wanted to. When I got back at 2, I had a lot of computations to do, then had a bath & shave & after dinner I was too fagged to write. Today we came about 10 miles. I haven't had enough sleep each night, but no chance of having a Europe (*sic*) morning, for a long time. What I intend on doing is closing a letter every five days & then sending it in when the chance occurs. Darling, I'll write to you as often as I can, but you don't know what a lot I have to do & how tired I feel by at the end of a day's work. It is very cloudy today & quite cool, so perhaps we may have rain. Yesterday was boiling hot. We separate tomorrow into two parties for about 10 days. Tomorrow letters come out, at least we hope so; that will be jolly. I wonder what you are doing & where you are. Oh! how I long to be with you. I think I'll leave my moustache as it is & you can cut it about as you like. If it's clear I have to go to a hill 7 miles away; if it's dull I shall do some plane tabling myself tomorrow. You dear sweetheart I just feel as if I couldn't write much more, inclined to go to sleep. I think I shall have to take an opening pill.

"May 3. I started at 6 & got back at 3.30, then Sergeant arrived from **Tongshan** & brought with him a mail. Your dear sweet letter of March 22. I'm so glad because you have at last got a more loving letter from me. Yours was a dear sweet letter, about Aunt **Mary** having the children. Ida, try & arrange otherwise, because it will be so bad for the children travelling to the South of France & expensive too. My hat, I'm so busy, you will get nothing but short letters, but oh! dear darling pet, I adore & love you more than ever & think you just a perfect darling, put that in your pipe & smoke it & give me a kiss when we meet. No news of any sort about moves; look forward to our meeting darling, it's the only thing to do & I will do my level best in any way I decently can to get back. You are a darling to say you will come out however hot it is; God bless you, darling, heaps of love & kisses to yourself & the dear chicks, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

5<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: "My own darling sweetheart, We came about 10 miles yesterday to a valley in the hills & then last night it rained & this morning it is raining still, so I can't go out. I think however that it will clear up after a bit & I shall go off to a hill about 6 miles off. Of course this rain suits me very well, the hills will be beautifully clear after it. Now let's answer your letter begun on the 17<sup>th</sup>, ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. I feel quite happy reading it through, you're love is very precious to me, sweetheart. Leave has been opened from here, but only for 1 month & not further than Japan. I can't make any use of it myself. I want to keep my leave in hand, but I feel quite certain now that we shall not get away before August; there will be no more fighting though. About the children, Ida; I do hope your mother will have them. It wouldn't be good for them to travel about with aunt **Mary**, she has to have such a lot of care taken of her that they would be neglected. I had an answer from Cox noting my instruction to allow you to overdraw up to £200 if necessary. I quite understand all you say about London. I shouldn't mind being there myself; I don't grudge you being there one little bit, we can afford it for a certain time; of course while I'm out on a column like this I hardly spend any money. Whenever the happy time comes that I shall telegraph to you it will be first of all, "Leave probably middle August." I shall address Coxia, London & begin the telegram with "Ryder". Will you tell Cox that if they receive a telegram from China or anywhere near beginning Ryder that it is a you; then a little later on I'll telegraph "**Calcutta** August 30". That means that I shall arrive that date; then you were arrange to arrive at **Bombay**, between 10 days & a fortnight later. You dear, won't it be lovely. I can't tell you what a pleasure it will be to me to see your sweet pretty face again & to hear your voice. If you want to telegraph to me out here, go to the telegraph office, there is a code word I believe for China Field Force, Ryder, Peking would certainly reach me & you can telegraph at half rates. Don't forget to write to me % Surveyor General, **Calcutta**, to arrive before I do telling me the name of your steamer & the date it is expected to reach **Bombay**. Thanks so much for sending out the "Standards". I have jolly little time to read them though. Poor **Enid**, I'm so sorry she still has bronchitis &c. I'm afraid my mother has been really ill. When we are together it is just the time when I want to spend money. While we are at **Chatham** though we shall have to sit tight; but you darling, I'm not one little bit cross with you; after all we've invested £400. & we are a good deal better of them we were 3 or 4 years ago. About those yellow silk cloths Ida, I got all together about 100 & I think of those I still have 20 or so in **Peking**. I don't see how we can use more than 1/2 a dozen ourselves & I think it would be quite easy to sell them at Liberty's or some shop like that. They are quite unique because they are Chinese Imperial & no one can use them except the Emperor in China; only if you sell them, take off the tapes. Give a few away to anyone you want to make a present to. Maybe they got spoilt going home. You mustn't mind if I'm not looking very smart when we meet. I shall arrive at **Calcutta** with nothing decent to wear, but I will have things made there as quickly as possible. I don't think we shall get back to civilisation before 10<sup>th</sup> June or so, then I want to go up to **Shan-hai-kuan** for two days & then I'll go up to **Peking** & I hope then I'll hear some real definite news about our going. The idea of the generals was that the force would break up about the beginning of August, but we are sending back 4 regiments of infantry & 1 of cavalry as soon as transports can arrive. Now sweetheart, I have made a good start with this letter & I must get to work, so au revoir.

"7 pm. I've been up to two hills today & did a lot of work. I had such a lovely view. Turner & Sergeant came up the 2<sup>nd</sup> hill with me, but didn't like the sweat, however it was quite cool. We were going to send a man in for letters tomorrow, but I think we won't now till the day after. Bother it's dinner time.

"May 6. I was out from 6 to 4 & on my feet all the time, so I am jolly tired, however I'd enjoyed a bath when I got in. I cut the ends of my moustache short, Ida, but I don't admire myself, perhaps I haven't done it quite right. I wonder who is the man you admire with a short moustache! I had another fine view; I had such a climb up to my hill, it was rather a khud<sup>73</sup> & I felt a funk coming down, because my boots were slippery. Turner has just come back from his evening walk with a lot of snipe. I do love getting a letter like your last, I like to know you love me just a little bit. Much love, you dear & heaps of kisses, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, C.H.D. Ryder."

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73 A ravine (Hindi).

5<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, I sent you off a very shabby little letter to days ago, now here is another chance of sending in. I am having a lot of hard work. Last night it rained hard & today till 10 o'clock, when I went out & am just back, 3 o'clock. The rain has cleared away the haze, but there were heavy clouds on the high hills. Your last letter was of March 21. I am glad the consumptive hospital is to be a little further away, even now I'm very sorry it is to be anywhere near us. I think M<sup>me</sup>. Tussaud or Ua (?) museum ought to have my torture pictures. I thought **Wellswood**<sup>74</sup> would have to be sold, I am sorry though; however it is better to sell now than for John<sup>75</sup> to have to leave when he is an old man. Many thanks for the 3 “Times” you sent. We don't get any news out here, but I don't think there is any chance of our leaving China till next August. I am getting rather weary of it; however I'm very fit & well. I believe our hot weather quarters are to be at the **Summer Palace**. My working at Chinese has to go by the board, I have too much work to do. We left **Tongshan** on the 29<sup>th</sup>, only did 8 miles in the plain, put up in a large village, then in the evening I went off to a little hill with a Temple on the top & observed from it. On the 30<sup>th</sup> we marched 8 miles to **Teng-jen-hsien**, a town where we halted a day, during which I went off to a hill 6 miles away; my Madrassi escort were not happy climbing the hill. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> we came along at the foot of the hills to **Shali-ho** halted a day there. I had a very long day out & then yesterday we came 10 miles northwards in amongst the hills, so we shall go out dodging about only doing short marches, but then I have to go up hills in addition. The Madrassis are very slow in the hills, but I shall soon get them into training. We changed our doctor & the new one, Sergeant brought out our mail for us. It was quite cold today & we haven't had any really hot weather yet. I am so glad you are better, mother dear, but I really do hope the next time you are near London you will go to a really good doctor. **Mowbray**<sup>76</sup> is very lucky in getting command officiating of his regiment, but he is a good fellow & deserves all he gets. We put up in good Chinese houses & live very comfortably. It is rather pleasant after having been subjected to sneers & insults from the Chinese to see them so humble. We halt here tomorrow & then go back into the plain. Major Cap Turner who is in command is a very pleasant companion. I wonder whether **Wiffs**<sup>77</sup> has got his South African medal yet. I see some are being presented, but what a business it must be making out all the lists. I suppose there must be over 300,000 medals to be struck. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“And with luck it takes 3 months to receive an answer from here to England.”

10<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, This morning a mail turned up with yours of March 29, you hadn't had a letter from me that week & so you didn't love me; but it's no good, you can't prevent me from adoring you. My dear, it is such a stormy day & so cold, windy & rainy. The man who brought out letters goes back tomorrow so I must hurry up. I have had no end of computations to work out, the last three days, but I've nearly finished now. I had a letter from Renny-Tailyour from **Tientsin** saying that it was quite true the 1<sup>st</sup> B.L., 1<sup>st</sup> Madras Pioneers, 28<sup>th</sup> M.I. & Madras Sappers are going back this month & he thinks more troops will follow, that the French are mostly going & he also says “I think it would be an excellent business if we (the Survey Party) could do in July”; so altogether I am feeling more cheerful, although your letter was not very loving; but it is a great mistake when our letters take so long to answer to write according as one receives, but to always try & write as loving & long letters as possible. You don't tell me how your landlady & landlord had been rude to you, you poor darling, I do wish I could sometimes help you, sweetheart, but I can do nothing. I'm glad Mr Petre was so kind. Yes, General Davies seems quite fascinated with you, but then, I'm not surprised, because you're a very charming little person, & I rather like you myself! I'm very distressed because the P&O Solvaon (?) has run on some rocks near **Shanghai** although they say everything will be saved, it is quite possible my boxes I was sending home were on her, even if the things are saved, they won't be improved & they will be very much delayed. I'm telling Renny-Tailyour that we should hear of our going while I am out on this column, to send you the telegram, as I couldn't without a good deal of delay, because I know you will want to know as soon as possible & it is sickening waiting day after day

<sup>74</sup> This had been the home of Charles' uncle Admiral Sir Alfred Ryder (1820-88)

<sup>75</sup> I can't trace John as a relation.

<sup>76</sup> Mowbray Thompson, husband of Julia's sister Mary.

<sup>77</sup> His brother Wilfred.

& not hearing. My hands are so cold, my sweet, too cold to write comfortably & this on 10<sup>th</sup> May, but my room is very airy. Tomorrow Domenichetti & his party join us & we then go northward into the hills again. Oh! how heartily sick I am of the whole show & how I just long to be with you again, anywhere & anyhow so as we are together. I've had such bad piles, the worst I've ever had, from being constipated, not painful, but heaps of blood, otherwise I'm very fit. There is a certain **Captain Ryder** who doesn't pay his bills very regularly. I've just received a letter % Cox, for a bill for £8 odd for photo materials from a shop in London, the other day I had a doctor's bill from Colchester, I have to return them of course. Thanks so much for sending me out the Standards again, everyone eagerly read them. I wonder if **Harry**<sup>78</sup> will pass the Militia Exam into the army. I do hope you will, because he ought to get in before **Chucky**<sup>79</sup>. I think we will take a house in **Bangalore** & hire the furniture. We shall really be rather comfortably well off now, drawing about Rs1120 clear a month. I should like to get a house near the office, but anyhow I shall be able to spend the afternoon at home, taking work from the office. I think I'll go to office from 10 to 1.30, then home for lunch & work with you by my side.

“4 o'clock. The others have gone to call on the magistrate, but I've done enough of that sort of thing before, so I stay at home. My sweetheart I feel very hopeful of leaving in July & meeting you in August. We're going to ride out to where Domenichetti is, as it is only 4 miles off, but it is too rainy; besides I have to rest myself for my little complaint. You darling, I don't like to raise my hopes too much, but oh! how delightful it will be to be with you once again. Fancy you will get this letter about the end of June, perhaps on our birthday & you may be starting 6 weeks after. You darling, many many happy returns of your birthday. I can send you no present, sweet, but those 10 boxes if they get home safely will have to do for one. I feel convinced that by 28<sup>th</sup> of June I shall be packing up to start for India & so I shall feel happier than last birthday. Anyhow this year we must have our wedding day together. You dear pet, I do adore you & love you more than ever, but you must make love to me too, please, when we meet. Sweetheart, I must shut up now & work. God bless you, my darling, fondest love & heaps of cases, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

“I'm forever thinking of you & the chicks.”

11<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, I shall have to wait quite a week for another letter or probably for any news of any sort. Today I stayed in. Domenichetti came over from his camp numeral 4 miles off to breakfast & then just now I've been out watching Turner snipe shooting, he only got five. We march tomorrow & I have to go up a hill as well but it won't be very far off the line of march. Sweetheart, every day I long for you, more. I'm so sorry darling I haven't always written lovingly to you. I do adore you with my whole heart; it's more the feeling of weariness at being separated from you that makes me right dully. Dear pet, I shan't be one bit happy till I can see your pretty face again. This will probably be on the wharf at **Bombay**. Sweetheart it will be very hot for you & I adore you for coming out, and I'll do everything I can to make your journey up to Bangalore comfortable. It will be one day & two nights in the train & I often think that under the circumstances it might be better to stop a night at **Bombay**, only I want to get you out of the heat as soon as possible. I shall be drawing about Rs350 a month more than when you were last in **Bangalore**, so we shall be very comfortable. I hope you will bring out a bicycle, you seem to have quite given up riding while you were in town. It's unfortunate my being out in camp just now, because I can't send you home money so regularly; but I think I've arranged it all right. Of March's pay £74 or so went home, out of May's & April's you will get about £70 each; - do - out of June; July I hope I shall be on board ship on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, so I will draw that in **Calcutta** & keep it in hand till you come out. June's pay will not reach England till after you've left (aren't I counting my chickens), but still I've arranged with Cox that you can overdraw. Come out with a comfortable lot of things for yourself. When you get to **Aden**, you have to fill up a customs paper, but practically all your things come under “wearing apparel”, only bicycle or things of that sort you will have to pay duty on. Your ship will not be a bit crowded. I'm afraid you will have it rough from

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78 Ida's brother Henry Hastings Grigg (1880-1915) killed in action at Festubert.

79 Ida's youngest brother 'Tommy' was Major, W Yorks Regt. I think also known as Chucky, who was awarded the DSO, MC & OBE

**Aden** to **Bombay**, but I shall have it as bad from **Singapore** to **Calcutta**, & I don't pity you in that respect as much as I pity myself; my ship is bound to be smaller than yours, and probably much more crowded. Now, love, I must do some Chinese.

“12<sup>th</sup> May. We didn't March last night, as late last night a note came from Barwell of the 4<sup>th</sup> P. I. that he was coming out to relieve our infantry with 80 of his men, so we halted & he will catch us up tomorrow. As I had finished all my work yesterday, I've had rather a dull day so I did quite a lot of Chinese, also wrote a letter to my mother as I hadn't sent one last time. We march tomorrow & the next day & then I think we shall halt 2 or 3 days as we have to get into communication with a party similar to ours that came out from **Peking**. I hate being away from the news of our going away; up in **Peking** now one would hear all sorts of rumours, most of them not true but still they would encourage one & give one tempted to think & write about. My piles are better. I've seen some very nice leather folding medicine cases made by Burroughs & Welcome, we will get one to take out into camp with us. Sweetheart, and this is another beastly stupid letter, but I feel very dull, a march will do me good.

“7 o'clock. Just been out for a stroll round the walls of this little town. A dak came in but nothing for me. I didn't expect any though, so I wasn't disappointed. Sweetheart, darling, you do love me, don't you, because there is no one in the whole world I admire & love like you. You're such a dear sweet darling; oh, if only we could be together, I would make love to you all day long, to say nothing of the nights. God bless you, dear heart. Tell **Margaret, Enid & Violet** I would like to give them each a good kiss, but much more, darling do I long to see your pretty sweet face once again, heaps & heaps & heaps of love & kisses, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

12<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Julia: “My dearest mother, Our infantry escort is being changed, 80 men of the 4<sup>th</sup> P.I. under Barwell meet us tomorrow & our present 80 men of the 28<sup>th</sup> M.I. return as their regiment are going back to India at once, along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Madras Pioneers, 1<sup>st</sup> B. L., Ulwar Infantry & Bikaner Infantry & a company of Madras Sappers. This knocks the whole 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade on the head & I believe troops will go on being sent back steadily. I myself think I shall get away in July, we shall have finished all we can survey by the middle of June, then the rains come on & we can't get about, so it is no use our staying to do nothing. However I have another month before I have finished this piece of work. We have had such a lot of rain, made it quite cold for two or three days, now it is very pleasant & quite clear & I've had fine views of the hills. We got a mail in the day before yesterday, your letter was of March 28. Everyone grumbles very much at the bad postal arrangements here during the winter, but I fancy our letters go pretty regularly now; only when I'm out I can only send in letters as opportunities occur & they may or may not catch a mail. I wonder who you will get in place of Annie, her husband to be is a bold man, won't he get in hot (*sic*) now & again. Our upper wood always seems to run many dangers, somebody else tried to bag it before didn't they. Yes, there is no doubt that the Hospital will spoil the country a good deal. Who bought the rest of the Chancery property? It is such a lovely day today but now I think it will soon get hot, however the hot weather is not long & I certainly hope to be off two months hence. Living in Chinese houses has lost its interest to me, but all these fellows are very interested in everything. I've been able to do a little more Chinese lately, and have now set myself a regular task every day. We shall soon visit the Imperial tombs which are about 20 miles north of here, these part of the present dynasty. I've already seen the ones of the last dynasty, but I believe the latter are the finer. Thanks so much for the “Times”; they are very welcome to me & then I can hand them over to the others. We halted an extra day here, as one of the sepoys had pneumonia badly, he is going back with the rest of the infantry. I shall be glad to do a little refitting at **Tientsin**, in boots & socks particularly. It is rather unfortunate I find great difficulty in getting a pair of boots to fit me as the joint of my left big toe has a slight permanent swelling; I got it while marching through snow in Thibet. Much love to you all, ever your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

14<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: “My darling sweetheart, We are able to send in letters pretty often. I got a mail today but no English letters. Tomorrow we go out to see the tombs about numeral 6 miles off. Everybody goes to bed very early, it's only 10 o'clock but I'm the only one not in bed. I've just finished

plotting a lot of points on a board & my back is rather tired. We had a thunderstorm this evening. The flying bugs are beginning round the candle. We shall soon have all the jolly things of the hot weather. I had two letters from Renny-Tailyour, he tells me all the gossip about going, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade & cavalry brigade will be the next to go but no date settled, but 8,000 French are going; also Count Waldersee's cook has been ordered to get a grand farewell banquet ready for May 15. Renny also says there is no object in our staying here during the rains, so I am now quite certain that I shall be leaving in July. Hoopla! What joy to feel (*smudged*) – that was a flying bug, not me – I am getting nearer to you. You darling, goodnight & God bless you. I shall finish this off tomorrow.

“16<sup>th</sup> May. Yesterday we had such a jolly day. We went to see the Eastern tombs, a little narrow gap in the low hills near us lead us out onto about 2 miles of grassy country & then on the opposite side all the hills were well wooded & one could just see the yellow roofs of the tombs shewing up amongst the trees. Three German officers turned up then came round with us; we saw 3 out of about 8. They are more like temples than tombs & all amongst such lovely woods. Each two has a long avenue with great stone animals, elephants, tigers, horses, camels & two nondescripts, 10 on each side & then 6 big stone officials on each side to guard the tomb. We then heard that Col. Phayse & the other survey party were only 4 miles off, so we rode out where they were, stayed there a bit & then came back. Today I had to ride 10 miles westwards & back to meet another party, got back about 2, learned my Chinese exercise for the day, had tea & here I am. It rained last night & this morning so it is cool, but the flies are getting a nuisance. Oh! How I wish you could have seen the view of the tombs & the big hills behind. I should like you to have painted them. They are the Emperor's tombs of this dynasty. While it was being built for the Empress Dowager. The Chinese official said she came to see it 2 or 3 years ago & didn't like the way it was built, so had it all pulled down & now they have nearly finished it. Ordinarily these tombs are full of most valuable jade & all china, but all these have been carefully hidden away somewhere. I should have liked to have had the looting of them. The rest of the party have gone to see a temple 2 miles away, but I have had enough outing for the day. I'm longing for another letter from you, dearest, ought to get one in a few days. This letter goes into **Tongshan** tomorrow, gets there on the 18<sup>th</sup> & the man will take two days to come back to **Tsun-hua-chou**, so we may get letters on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Sweetheart I think of nothing but getting off to you & of our happy meeting. I adore you more than ever, you darling, heaps of love & kisses for ever, Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

20<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: “My darling sweetheart, Today I had more or less of a halt & a holiday, but I was so sick at finding out a mistake in my work that I couldn't write. Sweetheart, I can't tell you how it bothers & distresses me to find that I am constantly making mistakes in the very simplest arithmetic. I used to be so good at it & now I'm really very bad. I have to work everything twice over & in spite of that I've made this mistake somewhere. I put it down to being so long separated from you. I just feel awfully low spirited, darling; how I wish you were here to comfort me. I expected to get a mail here, but none has come. We separate into two parties tomorrow I bought some fans for you, today 30, I paid \$10.60 for the lot; the handles & all that are common but the fan part which is paper is hand painted, figures of Chinese men, women & children, so well done; then I bought two on silk for circular fans unmounted, \$1 each. You've often said you wanted fans, you were always breaking them, now you've got them; but I think I shall give 10 to Renny-Tailyour. We are in a very good house today. If only my work had been going on all right I could have written you a lot today. Sweetheart, forgive me, I could just howl. It has been cloudy the last few (*days*) with little rain & so not hot. I think we shall finish our work about 10<sup>th</sup> June, & I shall get to **Peking** about the 15<sup>th</sup> & then I hope to think about packing up. It will be a tremendous relief to be off to you. I feel I'm getting awfully careless & stupid & I want you to help me.

“23<sup>rd</sup> May. I never had so little time to myself. I've been out 9 hours today & am dead fagged & the same or more every day; however tomorrow I hope to have a little more time, but a mail goes off tomorrow morning & I've only got this miserable letter for you, however, no one else gets a line from me this mail if that is any consolation to you. We got an English mail yesterday, but no letter from you, a great blow. It was Good Friday & also you were going to Stevenage, but I hope for two letters next

week, however we are changing our base for letters, so there will probably be an extra delay. Darling, I love & adore you, but hate scribbling in a hurry. I can't make love, the flies are getting bad. There is a fine temple on a high hill near here, I had to go up to observe & asked the priest to give a very fine bronze God, which he did. I also got the other day the God of contentment, he has a very fat stomach & as it is bare, I don't know whether you could quite put it in your drawing room. No news about moving out of China. I think we shall get onto the railway about 10<sup>th</sup> June; I don't know when I shall have time for long letters, sweetheart, but please, please don't think it is because I don't love you. I'm very well now, but so tired of the whole business. I want a rest somewhere with you. The Chinese are making objections about the indemnity, so the French have cancelled their orders to leave, which will probably bring the Chinese to their senses. I've not only been out all day, but I've got to do an hour or more star observing, & have only just this little time for you, darling. We march tomorrow to near the Great Wall. We've been very lucky in the weather keeping cool so long. God bless you darling & may our meeting be soon. This the 3 dear chicks for me & take heaps yourself with my adoring love, for ever Your very own lover & husband, Charlie.”

27<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Oh! Don't, don't write letters like I've just received again. To the misery of being parted don't add the misery of doubts as to whether we love each other. I suppose it has been my fault & most bitterly do I regret having ever seen this d—d country, if it is going to make you love me less. Darling, I know I've often written you a short letters & now I feel so miserable I don't know what to do. It is all my fault, but what can I do. Dearest the fact that ladies are in **Peking** doesn't allow officers of the Field Force to bring their wives out. The only one that tried was Hume & he came out originally not by trooper but by P&O from England, & of course his wife could come out with him then. Well he had to leave her at **Shanghai** all the winter. Then she came up to **Tientsin**, after six months waiting, against his wishes. He was then specially ordered to stop her from going up to Peking & she now stays at **Tientsin**, he has been able to go down there once. There is no other wife of any officer of the Field Force in North China. Mrs Hume has had to live at hotels & Hume whom I know very well told me that in consequence they had spent all their money & had gained nothing, except being made a general joke of. When I get back to **Peking** if I see that we are going to spend the summer here, I will telegraph to you to come out to Shanghai & I will then take two months leave together somewhere, **Japan** or somewhere. That is all I can do & is what I've been thinking of for a long time, only, don't you see, Ida, we are always hearing we are certainly going back before a certain date & then I think to myself that even if I telegraph you would only come out to find me going on a trooper on which you couldn't go, back to India. I also promise you very faithfully that I will never again volunteer for active or for any other sort of expedition that will take me away from you. Now I wonder whether you will ever see from that, that I love you just a little. Your letter has come just at the time when my work is worrying me beyond measure & I did want some comfort. I cannot apply to go back to India myself off Field Service, surely you know that is as much as to own oneself to be a coward; to be ordered back is different & that I have already hinted at as loudly as I could, without any result. Sweetheart darling, please don't think for one moment that I'm not just as much in love with you as I ever was; at times these sort of hopelessness of ending this separation makes it so difficult to write; not that now I feel hopeless about it at all, because I feel quite certain the Survey Party will start back in July. You write as if I could go away if I liked but preferred staying here, which has just made me laugh, although my eyes are full of tears the whole time. There is no possible manner of means of my going home to England other than by deserting or resigning my commission. You must be a bit reasonable, old girlie, your letter really makes me awfully unhappy. I can't remember ever being so unhappy, the misery of being separated is bad enough by itself. I have already sent you some little photos of me; I can't have a regular photo taken in uniform because there is no photographer who will take single photos, besides my uniform like everyone else's is getting pretty ragged. Sweetheart, I think the whole thing is that we have been so much separated that we get careless of our letters, there are plenty of things in your letters I could jump on you about, but when it takes 3 months to get an answer to one's letters, it is better not to write things one would afterwards have rather left unsaid; for instance, you asked me whether I am still faithful? If we work together & you

asked me that I should just laugh & give you a kiss & you would understand well enough that that meant "that I love you too dearly ever to think of any other woman"; but when you write the question down on paper, & I didn't answer it you would be worrying yourself about it; of course you little stupid, I only think of you, it is not a question I ever dreamt of asking you, dear, all the same I rather enjoy parts of your letter, because I see that you love me, but I am vexed beyond measure that I should have been so careless about writing & let you imagine that I didn't love you when there are such important things to write about as our love for each other, I don't feel inclined to write about my day's work &c. Sweetheart when we meet all these beastly clouds of doubt about our love will be brushed away when they?

"I stopped here for breakfast & I ought now to be working but I am going to let that slide, because I expect we shall be sending letters back from here. Tomorrow we separate into two parties & meet again in about 5 days. We shall still I think get back to the railway about June 10. My mother sent me out some of these envelopes, so now I'm all right for them. Dearest, **Wilfrid** & I now write to each other about twice a year. I think it was beastly of him not to have gone to see you. Sweetheart after so many years of love you can't really think that I don't love you. Five minutes with you & I to make you own up that you were quite wrong & you'd see that I'm more in love with you than ever. I am writing by this mail to your mother asking her director from me to have the children, when you come out. I do hope she will. I am just longing to get back to **Peking** now. I wish I could get sick or something to enable me to get away. If I were only near a telegraph station I'd send you a telegram. Darling, I have no decent photograph of you now, the only one I have is all spotted & you won't send me out one. After all you can't be very conceited if you imagine that I could have once loved you & then given it up! You little goose; you know quite well that I adore & worship you; my absence from you all this time is quite beyond my control, surely you believe me when I tell you that, or else things are indeed changed. Why, it's the one thing I am always thinking of & talking about is when can I get away. Sweetheart you mustn't get into a doubting state about my love for you, because it makes me feel as I write that you may misunderstand what I write. Start with the solid permanent assumption that I shall love you as long as I live & that my love will grow stronger & stronger & that I think you the dearest, sweetest best little wife of the world; then if my letters are short, don't do & at once think that I don't love you. Jump on me if you like if I'm careless or anything else, but never never as long as you don't for one moment that my love for you. Why is sweetheart, my love is not so easily gained as that. I don't think you have ever realised how utterly lonely in this world I should feel if it wasn't for you. Who else have I got to love & who else cares two pence for me. About writing all round during this last year, I have been very bad, **Harry** & **Tommy** have had about one letter, likewise has **Blanche**, but I feel I can't write to anyone. Don't grudge me writing to my mother, darling, I continually miss a mail to her. Sweetheart, would you be my dear little wife, who I can feel will always understand me & never misunderstand me. I never could see why you did love me, but since I've been fortunate enough to win your love dearest, it has been the one great happiness of my life, & now here I am out of reach of telegraphs or anything & just got to brood over your letter till I get another. Physically I'm well, mentally I am just as ill as I could be, how very easily get dismal nowadays away from you; your letters have the power of making me happy or miserable, so, dear think of that when you write; I haven't remembered it myself when I have written to you, so I've no right to blame you. I have every hope that when you get this you will already have received a telegram from me. I shall anyhow telegraph to you to come out to **Shanghai** if we don't go to India. I can't get more than 2 months leave, but we will go off to **Japan** & have a little honeymoon. According to a Shanghai paper there may be a row on in **Corea** (*Korea*), which is not promising for are getting away. My darling, it is so unlucky I am away from **Peking** just now, I would telegraph a loving message & I could get some news. Sargent, our doctor just came in, he wanted me to hear him some Chinese lessons, but I said I couldn't just now & he discreetly cleared out. Oh! how I long for leave with you. I want to chuck all work & just sit & look at your pretty face, (kiss it just now & again) & listen to your dear sweet voice. Your mother says in her letter, "I did say I would think over the matter, whether I could take the children or not, but I don't feel quite equal to the whole business. It would be different if I could have a good experienced middle aged nurse with

them.. I don't care for nursery governesses.” Now if that's the only difficulty arrange for the nurse & let **Margaret & Enid** have a daily governess from somewhere; in fact do anything if only your mother will have the children. Now I must stop for a little, I can't leave my work any more.

“3 o'clock. Your letter has unsettled me & I haven't been able to do any work or anything. I've written to your mother asking her to have the children if you come out. Oh! dear, I should go simply wild with joy if I heard we were definitely going to go back to India. I count on leaving China by July 15. Anyhow before this reaches you, you will have had a telegram telling you to come either to India or China. I hope of course it will be India because we should then be permanently together. Sweetheart you will make yourself & me much less unhappy if you don't doubt my love. I know you love me, you have the same confidence in me dear. You are very very dear to me, sweetheart, & I'm just longing to be with you. I can't tell you how long today has seemed. I've simply sat at my table reading your letter over again, trying to extract grains of comfort out of it somewhere.

“28<sup>th</sup>. We separated this morning, my party came back about 8 miles & put up in the same house we were in before. I tried to have a sleep this afternoon to make up for a pretty sleepless night thinking over your letter, but the flies were awful, so I've got up. Darling, tell me you Love me & please tell me you know that I love you. Outside of thinking about you life is so uninteresting. I never never will go away voluntarily from you again; darling, there never has been any difference in my love to you, other than that every year you become dearer to me. I blame myself very much that might slackness about writing should have given you such a wrong impression. I'm afraid I've made you a very poor sort of husband, not half as good as you deserve, but now I feel very low spirited. When we meet I shall have to make love to you from the beginning again. I can't put all I feel into writing darling, words don't express my feelings one bit. I couldn't bear to lose your love or even a little bit of it. You're much too dear & precious to me. What an ass I have been. Sweetheart I pray to God that you love me as you did. Oh! if only I was within reach of a telegraph office I would telegraph & tell you how much I adored you. What mad impulse ever led me into wanting to explore or any rot of that sort, it's all vanished now. You are much dearer to be than anything else in the world. Sweetheart we will have a happy time together & forget all this beastly time. Darling, it wasn't altogether a selfish wish to go on service, it is natural for man, & any ambition I might have had to make a name for myself is always coupled with a thought for you too, dear. Sweetheart it's a long time now since we first met & I've adored you more & more. I love your dear sweet ways & manners. I think your face is the prettiest & sweetest in the world & as for your dear little figure, what wouldn't I give to have my arm round it now. You have made me a very dear good wife, but darling, you mustn't ever get into your head that I don't love you. You make yourself miserable & you make me absolutely wretchedly miserable. How can you imagine that I could ever give up loving you. Why I adore you from your dear sweet hair down to your dear old toes. Perhaps next mail you will have had a better letter from me & then write me a sweet letter & I shall feel happier again. There has just been some thunder & a shower which has cooled the air a bit, but it is not too hot yet. One of the fellows in the 4<sup>th</sup> P. I. with us, Ross, is the most hopeless uninteresting ass I ever came across. He only makes about two remarks in the day, but Cap Sargent the doctor is a good chap, he was a Bedford Boy, he is learning Chinese in the next room & his teacher has an awful voice. I work as hard as I can at Chinese, I only want the Rs1000 as a present for you, dear; but I'm afraid I shan't pass. I'm afraid it has taken up some of the time I should otherwise have written to you. Darling, I can't tell you how much I want a rest with you, I feel very worn at times, I could work a lot if you were with me, but a rest without you wouldn't do me any good at all. Now the last two or three letters have been very short, I mean mine, but I have had such a lot of work to do. I have not only to go up the hills but to work out the computations when I come back, then when I'm overtired I'm stupid & when I write, I don't feel as if I could write love letters or any other sort either. God bless you, my very own darling little wife. Just had tea, the others have gone for a stroll; but I shall have a very long day tomorrow & the mail has to be closed tomorrow night. Your letter has acted like a tonic for my letter writing, rather too much quinine in it though. Please dear, I want some sweets next mail. Tomorrow I'm going down by the river with 20 men in two boats, halfway I have to land & climb a very steep hill. I'm just longing to finish off this work. One feels even more out of the world here than at **Peking**. The

rest of the column going round to buy land have some 17 miles to do, so they won't get in March before I do. I shall be so interested to hear what you think of my boxes of curios; if I hadn't been with the headquarters I could have got a lot more. You dear old pet, I do long for you so very much. I'm so glad the boys<sup>80</sup> are so nice to you, they are dear fellows, both of them. I just began reading your letter again for about the 20<sup>th</sup> time, & as it brought tears to my eyes I put it away again. I should like to have used it on my knee & just scratch out most of your remarks. Darling I feel miserable on my account & also because I've made you miserable & I did always hope to make you a good loving husband; it isn't very difficult to love you, sweetheart; but you require a great deal of persuading, but I do love you. I'm feeling very lonely & homesick, darling; but I feel so certain that we shall be together in August, that it cheers me up. Sweetheart you must mix with your love with me some confidence in me; now you are by nature a bit of a flirt, anyhow you're pretty enough to get plenty of admiration, but I have the fullest confidence that you will be true to me, so must you always have the fullest confidence in my love for you. You've conjured up this imaginary bogey that I don't love you. The idea even of not loving you, (*sic*) but I hate myself for having been the cause of so much unhappiness to you, unhappiness I mean extra to that caused by our separation, I love your dear letter all the same, darling; if only you will write & say you know I adore you. You would make me very happy if you would tell me that, darling & you would like to make me happy wouldn't you, sweetheart. Please do. I am smoking the tobacco you sent me, "Pioneer" it is the sort I used to smoke, but I gave it up for Navy Cut, I think now I shall go back to it. I haven't a pair of socks out here with me that have any heels left, I shall have to get quite a new fit out at **Tientsin** & cool things for the voyage to India. I hope, darling, you will be all right for money, I've always sent you all I had; you understand don't you that you can overdrawn at Cox up to £200 if necessary. I want you to come out as comfortably as possible. When I get back to **Peking**, that is in 3 weeks at most I shall know it definitely if we go back to India or stay here for the summer. If we stay here I will telegraph to you to come to Shanghai, and will bag all the leave I can (you won't be allowed to come to **Peking** as long as the Force remains a Field Force) & we will have a lovely honeymoon in **Japan**, unluckily it will be the hot time of year; but anywhere with you is heaven to be after this long separation. Just read your letter through again & feel happier because now I notice the loving parts more & the others less. I've done practically no work either yesterday or today, & all owing to you, you naughty little girl. Oh! won't I be allowed within 3 feet of you, 3 inches will be the furthest & I shall kiss you till you get tired of me, I warn you, you will get to think of me a regular nuisance, at least you used to if I kissed you too much. I don't think we'll begin postcards yet awhile, I'm afraid it would be another month after you wrote your last letter of April 12 before you got mine when I began to get hopeful of going.

"I can't say this country is at all interesting; we are all amongst bare hills, owing to the rain there is a little green on them & the villages are pretty because there are trees round them. I am sending you a beautiful photo of myself, Col Powell on a pony & myself next him with one baggage & Chinese servants, taken by Wingate who wrote the inscription below. It was so cold I have a Balaclava cap on & generally look pretty good ruffian. The wall on the hills to the left is just like what the Great Wall looks like although it isn't really the Great Wall, which is about 8 miles further up the pass. You darling, you can't really love a ruffian like me. I had a beard for that month's trip but I always shaved in Peking, & I do now too; my beard I'm not a bit proud of, if only it was a decent colour it would be all right because it grows very bushy. I've just ordered my three boats for tomorrow, the River isn't big but it runs pretty fast. All the Chinese about here are very quiet & as respectful as possible. What they would be like if one hadn't soldiers with one I don't know. Now sweetheart, *au revoir* for the present, you're my Queen, but I have Government to attend to too.

"May 29. I've had a real tiring day. Starting at 5 I went down the river in a boat for two hours, then had a very stiff Hill to climb, got back to my boat at 12 & had another very an interesting & beastly hot four hours in here (?), got in here at 4.30, very hungry & very thirsty. We stop at this place for two days, in a very nice temple. Now tomorrow I must neglect you a bit & do some work. This letter goes

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80 Her brothers Harry and Tommy presumably.

tomorrow morning; it will take ages to reach you. I only wish it could reach you tomorrow, to tell you how much I love you. It was so hot in my boat today, the glare of the sun off the water has sunburnt my face pretty well, however I haven't to go out tomorrow. We now get our letters out from **Lanchou** on the railway & we shall gradually get nearer there, we are about 40 miles away from it now. The walls of this temple have most beautiful paintings on them, really good, unluckily they are painted on the wall, if they were on paper or silk I'd bag some. If I had less work to do I could write more darling. I have treated you awfully badly about letters, but I never could love you may did greasing scale, the better I'd know you the better I love you. You might have sent me out some old photos of you, dear, you never did understand my feelings about photos of you. When we are parted I love them, but when I can see you I prefer looking at you to looking at anything else.

“After dinner. But I shall be in bed in a few minutes I am so dead sleepy. I shall be able to write a little more tomorrow morning but I have one or two other letters I must write, one to Renny-Tailyour to ask him to send me some more clothes & one to my mother to whom I haven't written for a fortnight. Sweetheart, I feel certain we shall be together early in August, that is in little more than two months from now. I wonder if this might be the last letter you get before leaving England; as it's a long one that would be lucky, because I don't know how I should write to meet you *en route*. Of course by far the best thing that can happen is for me to go back to India, because taking leave from here will prevent my getting privilege leave or furlough after the Chatham course. God bless you, my very sweet darling, I do miss you so, although you are such a horrid little girl!

“& now darling this must close. My very fondest love, sweetheart I am, always have been & always shall be your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

“Heaps & heaps of kisses to you, sweetheart, in return for your one, & kiss the dear 3 for me too. You mistaken me altogether when I say I don't want more babies yet awhile. I should dearly love to have a son, or two, but it would mean you couldn't come out into camp with me & I want you to be with me, that's the reason.

“I can't send the little jelio (?) to this mail, this envelope is too small.”

30<sup>th</sup> May, Camp, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, Many thanks for yours of April 12. You had just got **Wilfred** home, but by now he must be off again, that is the worst of 3 months leave. We are still amongst the hills having split up into two parties again. The hills about here are bare with just a little touch of green on them going to the recent rain. Yesterday I came down the small river in a boat, there was very little water & we bumped along a good deal. Half way I had to get out & climb a very steep hill, finally got in at 4.30, having started at 4.30 am. Today we halt, but the man with e-mail goes off at 8. Luckily I always wake early. Thanks so much for sending me out some envelopes, I've had to use a scratch lot at times, the sort you sent are by far the best, strong with a sort of dark pattern inside. We expect to be back on to the railway at **Lanchou** by 10 June, & I think I shall reach **Peking** about the 15<sup>th</sup>. Trains run through from **Tongshan**, through **Tientsin** & up to **Peking** in the day, now. On my way so I must stop at **Tientsin** to buy clothes. I haven't any thin socks that have any heel left at all, & other things on the same lines. We have put up here in a very clean temple with such lovely pictures on the walls, not painted on paper or silk but on the walls themselves. We hear no news here of going away but I think we shall be all out by the end of July. I hope you will manage between you to push the consumptive hospital right back, & away from the village altogether. I am beginning to feel like my boots want to be sent to be mended. I am very fit really but feeling very worn & tired. My Chinese is getting on a little better lately, one of the other fellows on the column is learning too, & we set each other lessons, but as he is the doctor, he has the advantage over me of having no other work, as nobody gets ill on these sort of expeditions, the constant walking makes all the men fit.

“Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.”

4<sup>th</sup> June, Camp, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, This is jolly; it rained all last night & is steadily raining now, 10 o'clock. So we have decided that we can't march; I always hate having to alter

arrangements & as no survey can be done on a day like this it means the whole work is delayed. There are regular rain clouds down on all the hills, just as if the rains had begun. I closed a letter to you yesterday, but it can't go off. I should like to get a mail today but I am afraid there is no chance. How I should like rainy days if you were here; it is quite cold today, no sitting in shirt sleeves, but very glad to wear my khaki serge coat. I have packed up my things & have to unpack them again; if we'd only done this march today I should feel so much nearer. I've only I think 2 more hills to go up to bring my work up to the railway. I am just longing to be where I can get all the latest news. God bless you, my darling pet, you're very dear to me. I do hope the heat of the journey out won't make you ill.

"7 o'clock. I am writing under difficulties. Sargent is talking Chinese with my teacher on the other side of my table & I'm chipping in a word or two now & again, but it is very difficult. I believe you could speak Chinese awfully well, because you can mimic so well. I often wonder if you would like to come to **Peking** with me to learn Chinese if I don't pass, the great point would be that we should be together & in a good climate, & it comes as duty on full pay; then there is another thing I could do, go to Russia for a year to learn Russian, not that I want particularly to learn Russian, but I like to think out plans so that we shall be together. It would be so nice in the cold, really cuddling weather either in **Peking** or **Moscow** in winter, now darling, goodbye for the present.

"7<sup>th</sup>. Dear, dear, here's another chance of sending letters in. We joined the other party on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Our only difficulty was in crossing the river which was swollen by the rain & the ford which we had intended to cross by was impassable, however the Chinese had collected boats, so everyone was ferried over; then yesterday we marched here 15 miles, but I did another five going up to a hill. We are in a very fine house, plenty of room & clean. The magistrate sent us a Chinese dinner, which I persuaded the other fellows to try & they all enjoyed themselves, except Turner who wasn't well. We have an extra piece of work to do, so that we have still another ten days out. It is still quite pleasant indoors, nice for one blanket at night & to sit in pyjamas writing as I am in the early morning. I don't know what you will say unless I alter my ways, I always wake at 4.30 in the morning, then I shall have to wake you; I can't have any little hogs alongside of me; you darling, you are so nice to couple you so soft & sweet. Do you know one thing I do hope so much for, that is that some day you will want a son as much as I do; then I believe if you really want to have a baby it will be a boy, not unless, so you won't have any more babies, until you yourself really & truly want one. Darling, this is a very short letter, but I adore you & adore you & still adore you, for ever your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.

"Kisses to your pretty self & chicks."

7<sup>th</sup> June, Chien an hsien, to Julia: "My dearest Mother, We have reached a town again & are in (*a*) fine big house & every thing very comfortable. The magistrate sent us over a Chinese dinner, I gradually persuaded the other fellows to taste the things & finally 4 of us made a good hearty meal, most of the things were very good. There was a tremendous storm of rain 3 days ago, which has cleared the air & kept it cool, in fact it was quite cold while it was raining. It made us halt a day though & the next day we had to cross the river. It can (*bad*) risen so much the ford was too deep so we had to collect boats & be ferried over. We are now only 20 miles from **Lanchou** on the railway, so it is easy to send letters in & get them out. Your last was of April 18. I am so glad you feel really better, but all the same I wish you would take the next opportunity when in London of consulting a good doctor. We still have ten days work to finish. I hope then to get up to **Peking** & pack up. We have left the hills now, except that the plain is dotted with isolated small hills. We break up into three parties again tomorrow, only I probably stay here a day longer. I often wonder whether I shall ever sleep late in the mornings, for months now I've been awake at 5 & no when it is light earlier, I wake at 4. Of course we are much further north than India, here the latitude is 40° & so we have quite long twilight & dawn, not like I wear, as you know, night comes on in about 10 minutes after broad day light.

"I expect the Conservatives will get a beating at the next general election. People are ready enough to cheer the soldiers, but are not so pleased when they have to pay. Out here our force has cost about 1/3 of what the Germans have spent. I don't believe there will be any permanent settlement of China other

than it being divided up, which will be a great blow to our trade. I only wish we were going to have North China, I wouldn't at all mind serving here. Here we are on 7<sup>th</sup> June, & it is still quite pleasant, just like a summer morning in England in doors, of course outside it is much hotter. I am going to apply to be examined in Chinese just before I leave, but really I have no chance of passing. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“I have no stamps.”

8<sup>th</sup> June, Camp, to Ida: “My very own darling, Your perfectly sweet & loving letter of April 26, reached me yesterday & I have read it through 5 times already. Early this morning when I woke up, I had it out from under my pillow & read it through again. I am so happy with it & with your dear photograph in front of me, sweetheart, I am most deeply in love with you, just hopelessly gone on you. I so wonder whether **Enid** wrote her letter to me, I think that the writing is the same & **Margaret** wrote it, dear chicks. I was so delighted to get their letters & pictures. I too continually think of our meeting. I wonder what your scheme of defence will be this time but you know they never are of any use, are they, sweetheart, I honestly have a very very great wish to have a boy; I'd adore you more than ever if you gave me one. I often think whether we couldn't have one more try! but all the trouble & pain is for you to go through, so I don't like to say too much. When we meet you will just chatter away, I only want to look at you & kiss you & hear your sweet voice again. I have finished all my note paper so now I have to use Govt. paper. I have developed a very bad temper which can only be controlled by making much (?) of me & always letting me have my way. Thank you dear for copying out all your bank book. I counted up one three months in which you spent over £300 & then I thought I had better draw a veil over the rest, but I think I've been rather a good husband to you in the way of letting you have as much as ever I could. The telegram to you has gone off, Renny-Tailyour says. He says it is quite certain we go sometime in July, but he doesn't know the exact transport or date. I wonder whether you will like your amber necklace, perhaps it isn't the right colour or something. You can give me “something more than love & kisses” when we meet & I'm just longing for it. Thanks I prefer kissing you on the mouth but your cheek is very soft too, there are other places I like kissing you too! No, wishing won't produce a boy, or even their goal when we are all this distance apart. The first thing to do is for us to meet. One married officer out at the Cape, God leave to go down to Cape Town to meet his wife, but it took so long to get down there that he had to leave the same day, when he got back someone asked him what sort of that time he'd had, so he said, “Oh! awful busy, I got down there one morning & had to take the first train back the same day”. So 9 months after when his wife presented him with a baby everyone laughed. I think this will be one of those letters that you will have to tear up. If when we meet I find you have taken no precaution, I shall take it to mean that you very much want to have a baby, so think over it well. You see we can always take our 3 months leave, before the Chatham course, i.e. leave India on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, so if we met in the middle of August, you might be 4 months gone. I do long to see you in the family way again & to know that it is my doing. I've made you the mother of three little girls, now I should like three boys.<sup>81</sup> If you were here today I'm afraid your waist would be getting larger & your bust more rounded & fuller in a very few months. Sweetheart, you must turn this up; but think over it well, if you consent, it will be lovely & I will adore you more than ever; if you don't consent, well all right, I'll just hope you may later; but I particularly don't want to put you in the family way, unless you yourself are really & honestly as keen on having a boy or cleaner than I am; it won't do for you to feel that for love of me you would do anything I want you. I know you're a dear loving little wife & would agree, but that's not enough. If all the voyage out you think to yourself that just as much as you are longing to see me, so you are longing to have a boy, then there would be some chance of our having a boy & not a girl. This is a sort of letter to take to bed, & lie comfortably on your back & read, when you can imagine my arms round & under your back & kissing your dear pretty face; what goes on elsewhere we'll imagine only not write about! If you did happen to get in the family way when we meet, no. 4 would be 3½ years younger than **Violet**, that's not very rapid is it?<sup>82</sup> Do you know if you gave me

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<sup>81</sup> Remarkably he got his wish!

<sup>82</sup> Lisle Charles Dudley Ryder was born 31<sup>st</sup> August 1902.

one boy I should want another. It would be a great advantage having no. 4 born in England. How was it you escaped last time when I was at home; do you remember the time at **Bournemouth** when **Violet** was started. I always remember the night when each was started, I don't know whether you do & do you think we shall remember the night we meet at **Bombay** for the same reason? Now then, shut up.

“The others left here this morning. Sargent & I only are left, & we go to **Yung-ping** about 12 miles off tomorrow. The weather has got very hazy.

“June 10. Here we are at **Yung-ping-fu**, on the 12<sup>th</sup> we move up a bit north & I think meet Turner. It is getting really very hot, darling; it makes me think what a beastly hot time you will have my pet, but oh! anything to end this separation. God bless you my very own darling little wife, heaps of loving passionate kisses, forever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

17<sup>th</sup> June, China Field Force, to Julia: “My dearest Mother, We got back to the railway at **Lanchou** on the 14<sup>th</sup> & next day I came down by train to **Tongshan** to meet Renny-Tailyour & today I'm off up the line again & I have very few days work left, & then I go back to **Peking**. It is all settled about our going, transports begin saving early in July, but the Survey Party go on 20<sup>th</sup> July in the P&O Sumatra, as we have to finish up all our work first. I think we have 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the 16<sup>th</sup> B.L. on our ship, which is one of the biggest for which I am thankful, as we shall catch the monsoon, from **Singapore** up to **Calcutta**. We shall take about 20 days, so I reckon we shall be at **Calcutta** about August 10. I shall have to be there a few days to get some old clothes to wear & then go down to **Bangalore** or perhaps straight to **Bombay** to meet Ida, that depends on when she comes out. I'm afraid she will have a worse journey than I shall, but I shall be delighted to have this long separation at an end & to have my dear wife with me again. We shall be in **Bangalore** till we come home again, as there will be such a lot of maps to look after that I shall probably not go out surveying next cold weather. I shall be jolly glad to have a quiet time & to be in a home again. I'm so glad you are really better, but mind you take care of yourself mother dear. Everyone is very keen to get away; the regiments who stay behind are correspondingly disappointed. I got two mails from you last week, May 1 & 8. The English mail caught up the French as it so often does. There is quite a cool breeze blowing, I fancy there has been rain somewhere though not here. Will you address % Messr Grindlay, Groome & Co. Bombay until I have settled at **Bangalore**. I have asked for an exam in Chinese about a week before we sail. I should like to get 10 days leave just before the exam, not have any other work, that just cram Chinese. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“Many thanks for all newspapers.”

20<sup>th</sup> June, Shan-hai-kuan, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, “I came in here by train yesterday having finished my work & now I shall go back to **Peking**, only I shall stop a day or two at **Tongshan** & **Peking** on the way. Just a month today I shall be starting to you. It is lovely to think of, now I am working all I know at Chinese as I've applied for an exam about July 15; my darling if I pass & if I get the reward it will mean that you will have Rs1,000 to play with, what will you give me in return, a boy! Anyhow you will have to give me a jolly good hug & I like a kiss best for you when you've only got your chemise on, & if you loved me very much in that sort of costume there's no knowing what might happen 9 months afterwards . I wish you'd write out & tell me honestly what you really think about having another try, because sweetheart and I do love & adore you beyond anything & I want you to be happy, but at the same time I do love paying you attention, especially when I do it right into you & put you in the family way. My dear, I blush when I see it written on paper, but I have often told you that & will often tell it you again. Your steamer will probably arrive in the early morning; & when I think of our meeting, I always persuade you to come & lie down in the afternoon & then of course as it will be very hot, it's no use lying down with all your clothes on, so at least your address & stays must come off, then your petticoats & one other garment underneath, leaving you in your chemise, so mind you have a pretty one on when we meet, then of course you can lie down & go to sleep! Now you know my scheme, you can work out yours & it is good of me to tell you mine. You see I give you every chance, I wish it was today instead of two months hence. We shall certainly stop one night in Bombay may be

two. You see I shall be like on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1892<sup>83</sup> & I'm afraid you won't get much sleep. Owing to what I've written and in this letter I'm putting it in two envelopes, the inside one addressed on to Bombay, in case you don't get it; it is obviously only meant there your pretty eyes & no one else. You are a dear little wife & I adore you. If I had a choice between having 3 boys or 3 girls I'd choose the latter & you have given me very sweet dear daughters, but still please I want a son, or two or three. I think I won't ask for more than six children all together, but I'm so moderate as that only on the score of expense; if we were living in England with say £2,000 a year I should like on a year, wouldn't you like that. I think you had better write & tell the Empress of Russia to send her husband away for two years & then have another try as you intend to do. I don't consider you have done half enough yet. Of course we married young, **Margaret**, Sept. 16, 1893 & we were married on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1892 that is only 8 months & 20 days; I always look on that as rather improper! **Enid**, May 16, (or 23? which was it) 1895<sup>84</sup>, that is 20 months difference, 20 – 9, leaves 11, **Margaret** was 11 months old when you started no. 2 that is just about correct, not too fast but fast enough; then to **Violet** you really owe you're getting rid of your dysentery, but as she was born on Nov. 23, 1898 there is a great gap. 3½ years you wanted a great deal of persuasion before you started no 3 & even then you'd didn't exactly consent, only I took the law into my own hands, now what is going to be the difference in age between **Violet** & no. 4. When we meet **Violet** will be 2 years & 9 months; will it be the simple sum of adding another 9 months. All these letters you won't be able to write an answer to, as you will pick them up on your way, so I'll have to look for your answer in your sweet eyes & I wonder very much what your answer will be. I don't know the fellows here pretty well, so I sit in my own room most of the day & you get the benefit. Must do some Chinese now.

“June 21. I was rather bad all yesterday & longed for you more than ever, however I passed an undisturbed night & I only feel weak; just want a little petting. I wanted you to smoothe my pillow & generally make yourself at dear little nuisance. I have to wait some days for a mail from you. I wonder if you will have the gumption to address any letter to **Singapore**.

“22<sup>nd</sup>. My darling, I'm feeling just a worm (?), Had a couple of days headache & fever & general all overishness, made me long for you more than ever; sweetheart tear up this letter, perhaps I oughtn't to have written it, but still it's only for you to see. God bless you my very own dearest pet; thank you, darling, a thousand times for coming to me through all this heat, for ever your devoted lover & husband, Charlie.”

22<sup>nd</sup> June, China Field Force, to Ida: “My own sweet darling, I am now writing my real letters to **Port Said** & this is just a line to tell you so in case you haven't started. I've also written to the P&O agents at **Port Said** & **Aden** to send all letters addressed to you on board their ships that arrive at **Bombay** about Aug. 17, 24 & 31. If you don't come in any of those they are to send them on to % Cox, but if you have passed through them they are to re-address them to % Grindlay, Bombay. Do you see now what you have got to do is at **Port Said** & **Aden** tell the agent of the P&O, who you bag your letters & then tell him to send on others to % Grindlay; but if you haven't started yet or don't start for some time it might be worthwhile to write to **Port Said** to have one or two mails sent on, but that is a too impossible (?) contingency that you haven't started yet; if you haven't you only deserve this little letter. Sweetheart I've been having fever the last two days, but am much better this evening. I've already told you I sail in the **SS Sumatra** on the 20<sup>th</sup> July & expect to reach **Calcutta** on 10<sup>th</sup> August; so are the meeting is getting nearer unless you are a little rascal & are not coming out. God bless you darling, heaps & heaps of love & fondest kisses, for ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

23<sup>rd</sup> June, Tongshan, to Ida: “My own dearest darling, I'm afraid I oughtn't to have written everything that was in my last letter, but you know you are my one & only darling & I never think of anyone else in that we, never the slightest inclination to, *comprenez!* I got to **Tongshan** by train today still feeling very cheap, but now I'm feeling much better this evening. I'm in a nice cool bungalow belonging to the

83 The date of their marriage.

84 Enid was born on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1895.

railway with the 34<sup>th</sup> Pioneers in it now. I must stop here tomorrow but go to **Tientsin** on the 25<sup>th</sup> & hope to get next mail somewhere on the way as the trains meet; that will be the mail of May 16 then I'll send you off my telegram which will have to be rather a long one, because it must contain "happy returns" for our birthday & I think it will be a nice little birthday present for you, to know that I really am going to start definitely on a certain date. I believe the "Sumatra" is the biggest boat that is being used as a transport for which I am thankful. I wonder what you will be wearing when we meet. I shall have to get myself a complete fit out in **Calcutta** of nearly everything. If you could arrive at **Bombay** on the 17<sup>th</sup> that would be the most convenient, because then I could go straight to their from **Calcutta**, save me some time in the train, & if I went to **Bangalore** I couldn't do very much in the way of getting things ready for you, but I shall feel so happy I only want you & I don't mind where I live as long as you're with me, only I should have liked to have got things ready for you, my sweet, in the old way, just to show you I'm still your devoted lover.

"June 26. I got to **Tientsin** yesterday & go up to **Peking** on 28<sup>th</sup>. I've been getting some clothes of sorts but all rather unsatisfactory, however I have to be content with what I can get. It is beastly hot here, a regular sweaty heat. I sent you off my telegram today, "Ryder Calcutta 10<sup>th</sup> August you arrive Bombay 17<sup>th</sup> happy returns." My sheep the Sumatra is now down to sail on July 18, two days earlier than was arranged at first. Now what do you think of this little small notepaper<sup>85</sup>; don't talk about my only writing one sheet & a bit. My Chinese exam 15<sup>th</sup> July. While on the voyage to India I don't think I shall be able to send you of any letters, as I don't fancy way touch at **Singapore**; we do at **Hong Kong** to pick up letters & besides I am always bad at writing when it's rough. Darling, I feel our meeting is coming quite soon. I look forward to Aug. 17 at **Bombay**. God bless you darling & mind you love me like I shall you. A mail came in yesterday but mine is wondering about somewhere & I haven't caught it yet, gone up to **Tongshan** I fancy; however I see I have been mentioned in despatches at which I am highly delighted; 10 R.E.'s mentioned out of about 55. I won't get anything though, that I'm quite certain, so don't be disappointed. It is very interesting to me reading the list as I know most of the fellows. My main feeling, darling, is to like to do you credit; of course a lot of fellows have been mentioned, about one in 5 throughout the force, so it isn't very much after all.

"After lunch, my letters turned up; you darling, for 3 pages you've jumped on me & then you turned round because you had a more loving letter from me. Sweetheart, thank you from the very bottom of my heart for your loving congratulations, of more value to me than everyone else put together. I had only just seen the list before now seeing the whole despatch, I can see that I won't get anything, but still I'm very pleased at being mentioned at all, but better than anything is to get such a darling letter & when you forget yourself so far as to say you might think of giving me a boy or trying, it makes me very happy, because that is a sort of love that I have been waiting years for & why I've so often asked you. Is there any limit to your love, Ida & (?there always has been, & it just makes me worship & adore you more than I ever have before. I wonder whether you will telegraph out to me in answer to mine. Whatever steamer old time you decide to come out by, my darling, I shall probably not know till I get to **Calcutta**; I shall be so excited then to know whether I have to wait a week or a fortnight. I shall have very hard work darling up in **Peking** till we sail, working at Chinese, finishing up maps, & packing. Darling, I can't tell you how keen I am to get the Rs1,000 for you for the Chinese exam but if I fail you will understand what a disappointment it will be to me. I wonder what you got with the £16, my Peking Prize Fund money; yes I should like to have got it with you & then of an evening giving it you with you in a pretty chemise sitting on my knee. Oh! you little duck I do adore you. I shall get another mail in about three days, but never shall I get such a dear loving letter. It is quite possible in more sober moments you might change your mind & decide not to give me another baby, but sweetheart, so long as you love & adore me as I love & adore you nothing else matters. I hope when we meet you won't say you used to think I was a prince amongst men; I know myself I am an ordinary sort of a chap but still it is very sweet music to be flattered by such a pretty sweetheart, by one who is dear to me above everything else in this world. You will be reading this going down the canal & down the Red Sea,

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85 He continues on a sheet about 17" by 10" folded.

bestly hot, so that love letters will be all the more pleasant. To make your old ship shove along darling. I wonder whether we could go for a little honeymoon for 3 or 4 days up to **Poona** or a **Bombay** hill station, I will see what we can do. I should like to be alone with you for several days just as if we had just been married. You might write to Cox from **Port Said** or **Aden** & ask them to send you out your passbook made up to date so that we can know how much money we must send home. I wish now I had written you a regular love letter every mail, then I would have had one from you each mail. It's simply lovely to think that each day our meeting is coming closer. When you get this it will be only ten days off. I'm feeling quite well again, you darling, I hope the heat would make you ill, you are a dear sweet darling don't love me so much & then I set to work to think how I can show you my love; you do indeed "darling halve my sorrows & double my joys." If General Gaselee had sent in his despatches now when everything was over & when I really have done a lot of work I might have got something. I shall show him all my maps when I get back & tell him I have a little wife at home, home who values a DSO particularly.

"After tea. I haven't been out this afternoon because I wrote to your Father & my Mother. Your Father seemed delighted at my being mentioned. Sweetheart that my "mention" gives you pleasure & makes you proud of me gives me the greatest possible pleasure & I am as happy as happy can be over your letter. Now I think you ought to take steps to get yourself mentioned in the newspapers about next May & make a proud husband (father)!! I see the despatches were published on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I wish we had been together that day. That's a perfectly innocent remark isn't it? It's clouding over a lot, maybe it will rain or cool the air. I don't think I will bring a servant with me down to meet you, they are very little use in the train & I will be your servant, likewise perhaps at times a little your .lord & master, that all ways your devoted lover. May be you will have a head wind down the Red Sea, then it won't be so hot. I'm so glad you have taken to tennis again, you're a very good player & you look pretty playing too, but then you look pretty anywhere. The rule about special leave for the troops that have been in China is that one can add one month extra onto whatever privilege leave is due, but not to be more than three months altogether, so as by next August I shall have two months privilege leave due to me, I shall have 3 months leave due any time. If you go & get in the family way at once & things look rather that we just now we will take the 3 months before the Chatham course. I must find out what furlough I have due to me. I shall have quite a year due to many I know, but I'm not quite certain whether the Chatham time counts in in the interval of 3 years. I must put in between two furloughs. I see the Emperor of Germany's sister has just had twin sons for the second time; now then please walk up Miss Ida. I've just bought a nice big sponge, my last was torn to bits by some puppies. In my selfishness, darling, I keep forgetting that time taking you away from the children, but it won't be for long darling & I do want you, my honey, here's I'd do. This large sheet won't be suitable for reading on deck if there is a wind, so read it in your cabin & imagine yourself in my arms as you get to this part. The best way of getting things through the Customs house, is to bring a bag with you, which we can pass through at once & then later on we can come down to the wharf & pass the heavier things through, when they are ready; otherwise one has to wait hours. Now then my darling, I must close this & don't forget that I am waiting for my darling & ready, even without any encouragement to love & adore you, but all the same I want lots of love from you & give me a good hug when we meet & let the spectators go to blazes; heaps of the most passionate kisses to your lovely eyes, for ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

26<sup>th</sup> June, % Messrs Grindlay Groome & Co, Bombay, to Julia: "My dearest Mother, Very many thanks for yours of May 16. I'm so glad you're pleased at my being mentioned & thanks for your loving congratulations which I value very much. I don't for a moment think that I shall get anything further, because at the time the despatches were sent in I hadn't been able to do much in my surveying line although we've done a lot the last three months. I am at **Tientsin** just now, very hot. I go back to **Peking** on the 28<sup>th</sup>. It is rather interesting to see the place & compare it with what it was like 11 months ago when I first got here. All the main streets are in full swing, but there are still a good many ruined houses. My Chinese exam comes off on the 15<sup>th</sup> just before leaving **Peking**; I don't expect to (*pass*) but still the Chinese I have learnt is very useful to me, then we have to finish up all our maps & the 100 little things to be done before moving, so I shall have a busy time. It is so much hotter here that

at **Shan-hai-kuan**. There you always get the sea breeze but here one is shut in amongst tall houses, because all the houses in the foreign quarter are 2 or 3 stories. I may get two clasps to the medal, anyhow there will be one for the relief of **Peking**. We call in at **Hong Kong** to pick up letters, but I don't think we do at **Singapore**. The horses on board will have the worst time, what with possible typhoons round this side & certain monsoon on the other. I shall have to stay a few days in **Calcutta** getting some clothes made & then I shall probably go down to **Bombay** to meet **Ida**. **Bangalore** in August is very pleasant, cool & green.

“I think the rains will have begun before we leave. Last year there was an almost complete failure of the rains, fortunately for the legations. Thanks for sending me out so many newspapers. It will be nice to have your letters only 16 days old or so when I get to India & then I shall be home myself by the end of March at the latest. I shall also have 3 months leave due, but I don't know whether it wouldn't be better to take it after the Chatham course rather than before. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder.

“Please thank **Mary**<sup>86</sup> very much for her letter of congratulations.”

27<sup>th</sup> June, Tientsin, to Ida: “My own darling sweetheart, Late last night I got your wire sent down from **Peking**. You will have thought mine was in answer to yours, as we both independently have come to the conclusion that Aug. 17 is the day for you to arrive at **Bombay**, but you are very wasteful in your words, “telegraph if too early, Ida”; five words you might have put, “telegraph approval fondest love”; & no need to put in Ida, because there is nobody else that I am arranging a meeting with. I went to bed very happy with my telegram & now, look here only 4 days more of this month, & then I can say next month we shall be together, won't that be lovely. I hope you darling, you have a good ship & are fairly comfortable. I so often think about what you will decide, to have another try! or not. I should dearly love to have a son & our meeting is going to be such a happy one & we shall love each other so much that I sort of feel as if we ought to; but then you darling as the whole pain & trouble falls on you, it is really for you to decide. If you say yes, you'll be just a perfect darling & I'll try to make up for the poor time you will have by giving you all the love I have in me, sweetheart; nothing will be too good for you. I shall probably arrange to arrive at **Bombay** on 16<sup>th</sup>. How I wish I could just skip the next 1½ months & awake to find myself kissing your pretty face again. I shan't be with you a minute before I shall look into your eyes to see if you love me without any hint, so don't be a little tease then; you can't prevent your pretty eyes from speaking the truth though. All our meetings have been very happy ones, but this is after our longest separation & it's coming to an end at last, so we've got to be extra happy now. **Bombay** will seem to me the loveliest place in the world when you arrive, even the railway journey will be lovely; to think that I'm going to see my pretty wifie again & we shall be quite by ourselves & nobody to bother. It's very easy for me to say I should like to have a son, but sweetheart you must think of all the unpleasant part, the morning sickness &c. Perhaps it will seem easier to bear this time, because we shall be together & I shall love you more than ever; but if you decide no, I shall be much to happy to mind; the great thing is to be together.

“28<sup>th</sup> June. Very many & the happiest returns my darling. I only wish we work together, but my heart is with you, darling. Perhaps before next birthday<sup>87</sup> he may have their son, who knows; anyhow we shall spend it together in England. My Chinese servant always makes me unnecessarily early, when we are on the move. I go up to **Peking** by the 8.40; I remembered the day the moment I woke, so I thought I'd just tell you how much I adored you & what a darling good wife you'll have been to me, sweetheart.

“3<sup>rd</sup> July. Here I am back in **Peking**, got here on the 28<sup>th</sup>, our birthday, so I drank your dear health & to our happy meeting soon. I've been so busy, you dear & the two more letters I can send you to **Aden** are bound to be short ones. As far as I can make out you have had to change at **Aden**, which will be horrid, it is so hot there, but still it is better (for me) than waiting a week longer. My Chinese exam is on 15<sup>th</sup> & we leave the next day, go down to the sea, go on board on the 17<sup>th</sup> & sail on the 18<sup>th</sup>; you darling

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<sup>86</sup> His older sister.

<sup>87</sup> They shared the same birthday.

it is all too lovely. I will find out in **Calcutta** about my leave, because it might be more convenient to take my leave after the Chatham course. I think I could get 15 months leave then, in which case it might be better to postpone no. 4 for a few months, but anyhow I'll get all you all day long & night too. It's jolly to be back amongst my own things, but it is rather a job packing & arranging what to take for the voyage. Our steamer starts now on the 18<sup>th</sup>, so I think we shall reach **Calcutta** about Aug. 8, that will be 9 days before you, so I am pretty sure I shall go down to **Bangalore** first. My darling, I wonder where they you are longing for our meeting as much as I am. A mail came a day or two ago with yours of May 24; very short, just the sort of letter that if I had written to you, you would have been quite certain I didn't love you, but I don't mind a short letter so much now our meeting is coming so soon. You had been to a dance in town & had a good time generally; old Ida, I don't think you have had a bad time at home & will you really truly be as delighted to see me as I shall be to see you again. I'm simply counting the days, this month has 31 days us luck, still only 46 days more, & when you read this it will be only 5 or 6 days more. I like to send myself to sleep thinking of our meeting. You will just look a perfect darling. I shall reach **Bombay** on the 16<sup>th</sup> in case you're ship comes in early, but just in case you land & don't find me on the wharf, you must drive straight to **Watson's Hotel**. You needn't declare any of your clothes or jewellery, but you must in the silver things you are bringing out, at least I think so, but ask someone. Anyhow you have to pay 5 per cent on the value dutiable things. I should like to be able to come on board but I don't know how far plague regulations stop one, I know friends can't go out to the outgoing steamer. I wonder what your dear little figure will be like, slight I'm afraid, but still very pretty just like when we first married & no one would guess you had had three babies; still I don't call 3 in 8½ years very much do you. Don't forget the first question I shall look in your eyes for an answer. I wish I had been able to send you a telegram home earlier; I shan't be able to get an answer from you when you knew we were going to meet till we pick up letters at **Hong Kong**, & I'm so afraid you may have got some dismal letters from me first. Now, sweetheart, I must be off to my lonely little bed, it is 11 o'clock.

"4<sup>th</sup> July. My room gets very hot & I shall be a jolly glad to be off, too much bustling around now. I have written to de Lotbinière to look out for a house for us, but I will go down to **Bangalore** before I go down to meet you. Nobody loves me!

"Now I'll just tell you my little programme for the next year or two. We will go home in March for the Chatham course, that will be by hired transport, at the end of (*the*) Chatham course we will take privilege leave & furlough for 1 year, & then come out again & with our new rules Ida, after every three years service in India one can get 3 months privilege leave & 9 months furlough, that is a year altogether, but if we are going to do that we must save. The only drawback to this idea is that you couldn't travel home in March if you were in the family way in August, & that therefore we shall have to wait 2 months also; will you mind? I shall mind very strongly. God bless you my darling, your adoring husband is waiting for you, forever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie."

"If you want to flirt, wait till we meet, but if you must flirt on board ship, do select someone who is a gentleman & not one of the ship's officers."

4<sup>th</sup> July, Peking, to Julia: "My dearest mother, Here I am back in **Peking** & it is rather pleasant getting amongst my own things again. A mail came in a day or two ago of May 24. A newspaper from you but no letters from you. They may have gone off to **Shan-ha-kuan**. We sail on the 18<sup>th</sup> going down to **Sin ho** our embarking place on the 16<sup>th</sup> & going on board on the 17<sup>th</sup>. My Chinese exam is on the 15<sup>th</sup> & there is a lot of mapping to be done before we go. It is getting very hot here, it wouldn't be so bad in a properly built house, but the Chinese build for the winter. My room faces south & has no means of getting any praise into or through it. Everybody is on the move here & talking about it & jolly glad to be off. General Gaselee goes home through America. I fancy we shall get to **Calcutta** about Aug. 8. & as Ida wired out that she would arrive at **Bombay** on Aug. 17, The I shall be able to get down to **Bangalore** for a few days & get a house & collect our things together a bit. I think I shall keep my privilege leave till after the Chatham course & as I shall have a year's furlough also due, I can if I like stay at home for a long time; but with our new rule of being able to take privilege leave with furlough, I

can every 3 years get 3 months privilege leave & 9 months furlough, that is a year, the first three months of which are on full pay. We shall get two mails more here & then at **Hong Kong** we shall pick up 2 or 3 more. **Peking** in the hot weather is not pleasant, we are 3 miles from the nearest country, we generally go for a walk of an evening on the wall & watch all the building & fortifications in the legation area. When it is all finished it will be very nice, because there is a clear 100 yards or more right round with no houses allowed on it. The south side of the quarter is the city wall part of which is to be occupied, & there are two railways running right into the middle of **Peking** now. The Empress Dowager will not recognise the place when she comes back, but that won't be for some time yet. Much love to you all, ever Your loving son, Charles Ryder."

5<sup>th</sup> July, to Ida: "My own sweet darling, It rained last night, so this morning I came out to the **Summer Palace**, 10 miles, where I have a little work left to do which I want very clear weather, but it remained cloudy all day & now it's pouring torrents. I have a comfortable room in the palace overlooking the lake & it is ever so much nicer here than in **Peking**, if it clears tomorrow & I can finish my work, I shall go back to **Peking** the next day. I wish you were here, this is one of the many places I've seen where we could have a very happy honeymoon, sweetheart, I shall be so happy with you. Our drive from the wharf to the hotel at **Bombay** will remind me of a certain drive at **Lucknow** & the after events will be somewhat similar!! Only you know what to expect this time. I wish you were here, I just along to see your pretty face & hear your pretty voice again & make love to you in a pretty chemise & kiss you, but my arms round your dear little waist (under the chemise) & generally to lots of things I oughtn't to. I wonder whether you are longing just a little bit to be in my arms again! I saw some extracts from a magazine article today (written by a woman of course) saying that women ought not to have children at nearer intervals than 6 years & not more than 4 altogether; well, let's have the 4 first & then we'll see about the intervals afterwards. I think two years is ample, so you've quite time to have seven more.

"July 6. It rained a lot yesterday evening & today there are heavy clouds about, so I can't see my hills, so I have a man up at my station to come & tell me when any hills can be seen & I've been doing Chinese, now I want a little rest. The mosquitoes were bad here last night, luckily I had my curtains. Space I don't know that **Bombay** will be so hot if it's raining, probably the de Lotbinières will want to put us up till we've settled in our house. I'd much sooner go straight in, but it will take several days to unpack our things & set up house. How I wish I could have everything nice & ready to bring my little bride home to. You darling, I do so wonder whether you want a son as much as I do, there's no doubt I do very much indeed, but as I've often told you I don't want to have one unless you yourself really & truly are very keen on having one. My darling, you have been just a darling little wife to me, the sunshine of my life; now that's pretty isn't it, but it's exactly what you are, rather a restless little sunbeam, but still that does me good; anyhow nothing you to say can prevent the from adoring & loving you to the end of the chapter. I just longed to sit with my arm around your waist talking love nonsense to you; then you like an unromantic little beast will say, "well, Charlie we can't sit like this all day, I've got plenty to do, if you haven't & I hate sitting idle." Isn't that right. Don't you feel as if you had such a lot to talk about I shan't know where to begin. I rather wish we weren't going home so soon, so that we could settle down a bit comfortably. As far as I recollect at Chatham the houses are very small & crowded together & we want a fair sized house now with our 3 chicks & probably another one coming, I feel I might almost say certainly, what would you say? I wish I could read your mind, while you are reading if you don't want to have one. My writing so much about it may worry you into thinking that you will feel obliged to have one; but, you darling, please don't think that, with **Margaret** you didn't know what you were letting yourself in for; with **Enid** I always say you were willing, although you deny that now; with **Violet** I'm afraid it was a case of, "alone I did it"; with no. 4 it must be a case of mutual love for each other or nothing. Sweetheart don't think you're going to meet somewhat of a stranger; the only difference you will find in me that I shall love you more than ever & be more attentive & careful of you than before. God bless you, darling & make our meeting be a very happy one, as I am certain it will be.

"7.30. It has been pouring all the afternoon, a nuisance as I mess with the Field Battery, about ¼ mile away, however we go over in a trya (?) to keep dry. I've had one of those dull days that make me long

are you more than ever, however it's something to have got through another day. It is coming down just like the rains in India, one good thing is that it makes it much cooler & last night I pulled a sheet over me in the middle of the night. I wondered whether you are going round by sea or across to **Marseilles**. I'm just hungering for a site of your pretty face again. I do hope we can get a house near the office, but anyhow as I won't have charge of a party I shall generally come back to lunch, until I see you are getting tired of me. Do you still think an idle man about the house a nuisance, or not.

“10<sup>th</sup> July. My darling, great hurry, our ship has been put forward. I go down to **Tientsin** on 12<sup>th</sup> & on board on 14<sup>th</sup>. I'm packing & I have my Chinese exam tomorrow. Sweetheart, God bless & keep you. My own fondest, dearest love, for ever Your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

20<sup>th</sup> July, SS Sumatra, to Ida, “My own darling sweetheart, Here I am on my way towards you, our long separation coming to an end. It is delightful to think of. I started from **Peking** on the 13<sup>th</sup> to **Tientsin**, next day to **Sin ho**, where we slept on the small steamer that took us out on the 15<sup>th</sup> to this ship which was lying outside the bar. We've had excellent weather so fa, but I had a good headache, didn't go “there” for 3 days, which would be nothing to you, but doesn't suit me.

“Now sweetheart, what do you say to my news that I've passed in Chinese, aren't you glad; of course now I have to fight for the reward, so it will be some time before you get it, but anyhow I think I deserve a good hug for all the hard work I've done for your sake. We reach **Hong Kong** tomorrow morning; I don't know whether this will reach **Aden** before you do. We reach **Calcutta** on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, probably stay there for 4 days & reach **Bangalore** about the 8<sup>th</sup> so I shall have nearly a week to look about & see what is best to be done. I feel very much in love with you darling & longing to see your pretty face again. I will do my best for you to be comfortable in Bangalore, but as we shall be going home so soon, it won't be worth while going to too much expense, will it? I will meet you on board if allowed, if not I will be on the landing stage, & should you by any chance not find me there, go to **Watson's Hotel**. You see your steamer might come in unexpectedly early or something, but I shall arrive in **Bombay** on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>. God bless you, my darling pet, fondest love, the kisses I'll keep till we meet. Just before starting I got two dear letters from you May 31 & June 7; the boxes had arrived which made you love me a little bit extra. Ever Your adoring loving husband, Charlie.

“This is not a letter! only a line just to let you know I'm all right so far.”