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AIR MAIL

AMERICAN EMBASSY
London, England
November 16, 1941

My darling Philinda:

Here it is, a rainy afternoon in London, cold and dreary as November weather is supposed to be, and I am sitting in the office of Dick Johnson, one of the V.C.s here whom I knew in Italy. He was at Naples until the office there was closed last March and then went home to the School, after which he was assigned to London. He, as well as many other people here, have been terribly nice to me since I arrived here last Friday. Glenn Abbey, who is now in charge of the consular section, has been more than cordial, and it makes ~~me~~ feel very happy to feel I have so many friends. In a way, being in the Service is like belonging to a good fraternity with chapters all over the world. Wherever you go, the "brothers" take you in and make you feel at home.

By this time you will have received my last letters from Lisbon and know the situation ~~was~~ as it was then. I did not cable you until the last minute because I was always afraid something would come along to change the plans at the last minute, but on Wednesday morning they called up from the offices of the British Overseas Airways and said that I could leave the next morning. So I spent most of the afternoon getting everything ready: purchasing the ticket, weighing in, etc; then I went up to the office and said good-bye to all our good friends. Hervé, Parry, and Bill Cordell were there until the last moment. I had to make all my farewells in a whisper because my voice had gone entirely as the result of a sore throat. The next day it came back again, although I still sounded as if I were talking into a barrel. I feel all right now, although I still have a cough, and probably will for a week or so, judging by past experience.

I had to get up at four o'clock in order to shave and bathe before going out to the airport, and that was most unpleasant. But, strange as it may seem, I haven't discovered yet that I forgot anything of importance. Of course, I had done most of the ~~packaging~~ packing in the days before. I arrived at the airport promptly at six, and went through the formality of weighing in the baggage. It weighed two kilos more than it should have, but they didn't make any objection. I was permitted to carry my little bag with toilet articles in it with me in the cabin, and didn't have to pay excess on it at all. The flight itself was most uneventful. I didn't get sick, as I had feared, although a Red Cross lady who sat with me felt bad toward the end of the trip. We didn't land at the usual airport, but at another one at a greater distance from London. We had to wait there for three and a half hours for the officials to arrive. They had been waiting at the other airport. They cleared us through in a short time, although the inspection was rather thorough. The officials were all most polite, and tea was served while we were waiting for them.

After the formalities had been completed, cars were furnished to take us to the railway station where we got a train for London. It was only at this time that we learned there was to be a four

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hour wait between trains in Exeter. At the station in Exeter, we found one of the porters very kind, and we escorted us personally through the blackout to a hotel near the station where we were able to buy a couple of meatloaf sandwiches and some beer. As it turned out, we would have been much smarter to have stayed over night there, but everybody thought they had to be in London the first thing in the morning, so we waited until one o'clock and caught the train for that city. We sat up, of course, and arrived, after the fitful sleep one usually gets on trains, in London at 5:30 AM. It was as black as the inside of an alligator's stomach, and there were no taxis to be found. Two porters went out to look for them, and finally, after half an hour, we got one and came to the Hotel Cumberland, which is not far from the Embassy. There were greeted somewhat coldly by the night clerks, who informed us that they had no room whatsoever available, and that they were sure that there were none in any other hotels. He agreed, however, to let us use the very spacious men's room to wash and shave in, and we had a bit of breakfast at an all night restaurant. By that time, the city was beginning to wake up, and so it was easy to buy a newspaper and sit in the hotel lobby until time for the Embassy to open. I came over a few minutes after nine, saw Glenn Abbey, and learned that the date of my departure was not yet certain although originally it had been the day before I arrived. From then on, I have been spending most of my time at the Embassy waiting for news. It now seems likely that I will stay on for several days.

As far as I am concerned, the biggest thing I have seen since I have been here is your cable. They had it waiting for me when I came in yesterday morning, and I think that it was the happiest moment of my life, next to the one when I found out about "Us". You can imagine how I felt - maybe you felt the same way too. All that time you were on the boat and I couldn't get news of you or to you ~~were~~ was awful. I would try to recapture the feeling of calm security I had when we were together on Friday before you left. Then, I was sure everything would come out all right for us. It wasn't that I lost faith afterwards, darling, but I did want to hear that you hadn't changed your mind. For all I knew, Mrs. Parry might have argued you out of it, or perhaps, when you got in the States you would think you had made a mistake. Now I have your wire. Darling, you couldn't have said in a few words anything that could have hit the spot better. Just to know that you haven't changed your mind, and won't, means more to me than anything else in life. Your love is my only hope, my only chance, for the future. It gives me something to work for. I could ~~not~~ never be satisfied just working for me, for my career, for my own advancement. For me alone it has no significance. For us together it might mean something. At least, there would be you to share the pleasure with. But, my dear, life with you would be so wonderful that nothing else would matter. With you, things become different, and better. Your cable brought me all that picture of happiness for the future, of all the joy that we will know when our purgatory is finished. I love you, my darling, and I know that I always will. I can't get to Lagos too soon to get your first letter. I will wire of course. Take care of yourself, my sweet. Remember that you belong to me now. And I will do the same.

With all the world's love,

Bill