

4715

Bengal Club
Calcutta

24th March 1917

My dearest Pippa,

After first saying that personally I am flourishing, I must go on to tell you of the horrible things that have been going on here. About a month ago, it was noticed that Jack Sevens was behaving queerly - He has got steadily, and in the last few days rapidly, worse, and is now completely out of his mind. Colonel O'Keefe, the doctor in charge of the General Hospital, whom he has been now for a fortnight, takes the gravest view of the case. While not absolutely giving up all hope, he thinks that everything points to his being in the incipient stages of general paralysis, and if this is the case he cannot possibly recover, and the only comfort is that he will not be likely to survive. If he does get better, we have got to try to get him sent home, which will be extremely difficult to arrange, as they will probably refuse to take him on a regular passenger steamer, and he will have to have a doctor and somebody else to look after him, and it will be hard to find suitable people under the very strict regulations against people travelling now in force. Altogether it is a miserable business. I have told Maggie about it, and shall tell her this week that there is not

much hope now - I am afraid it will be a great shock to her. The future seems to be full of problems - Although she is doing her best to bear up it is quite clear she is pretty miserable and the fact is that she isn't fitted to carry by herself the responsibilities that lie so heavily upon her. I simply can't let her go dragging on in misery year after year indefinitely besides which to tell the truth I am not particularly happy myself living alone and I badly want to go home. Of course nobody knows what living is going to cost, and there is the children's education to think of, still I don't think I can bear to go on as we are much longer. Maggie's health seems to be a good deal better than it was and perhaps Dill will think it will be all right for her to come out in the cold weather (supposing it is safe to travel by sea then) in which case we might start things off for a bit - Anyhow I shan't be able to go until the war is over so there is no immediate necessity to decide anything. After the war, if I want to go home in the next two or three years it seems to me that I shall have to resign, as I can't decently ask for leave until first those who are fighting have had their share, and then all the other unfortunates (practically the whole of the staff) whose leave is long overdue - With my savings and M's fortune we shall have about £1250 a year (less income tax) so I should think another £500 would be necessary for safety.

When you see Ray will you tell her that her letter and documents have been received but there has been a slump in the coal share market and nothing doing in that line at present. Have you got a glorious post as Neville Chamberlain's right hand woman or have you been ousted by W? Asquith?

With fondest love
Ever your loving
Ralph

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