

4711

Road
5 Holland ~~Park~~
Hove
Sussex
9th March 1916

My dearest Pippin,

I had an interview with Sir W. F. yesterday. He hovered about a good deal and wouldnt make me any definite offer but I have discovered that what he is thinking of is to take me on as understudy to his Chief Engineer with a view to succeeding him when I have learnt the ropes - He began by saying that Palmer had written to him very nicely about me and then asked if I had any experience in dealing with the British working man (which I have not) He said that at least half the time of his head or departments and himself were taken up with labour questions, wrestling with trades unions &c. He supposed that with my position of C.E. I wouldnt care to take up anything that would not lead to my getting the same sort of position here. It would be very hard on anybody to start at the head of things at once with everything new to him, but some people get so touchy if you suggested to them that somebody should work under them with a view to succeeding them

eventually, and immediately began to accuse you of thinking they were getting past work that he didn't quite know what to do about it. It was really very difficult. He then asked if I thought my Board would let me work with him for a year on probation. I said I didn't know but that if I was to do that my leave would have to be extended which they might be disinclined to do. He said if he wrote to them to say that he was badly in want of an experienced engineer and ~~that~~ owing to the war and that it would be of great assistance to the Government if he could have me for a year, it might help them to agree. I said it might but that I should greatly prefer to have a permanent post if possible. He said he quite understood that but there were considerable difficulties and he might have to say nothing about my future promotion which would be a private understanding between us. Anyhow he would write and make a definite offer within a week. And he finished up the conversation by asking how you were!

I don't remember if I told you that at our first meeting he went into panegyrics over his Chief Engineer - a splendid man, on the Council of the Institution of Civil Engineers, wonderful at Parliamentary work,

thinks nothing of tackling Balfour himself, but greatly changed since he lost his son in the War, it seems to have quite broken him up. He used to laugh when I turned one of his plans upside down but he never does now."

I think he foresees that old Morgan won't last much longer and that I seem to have been sent by Heaven to replace him, but he is terrified of breaking the news to him and also he thinks it would be as well to see how I am likely to turn out before irrevocably committing himself to me - hence the idea of a year's probation.

I don't know what the Board will think about giving me another six months leave. It will be rather awkward for them if I were to be indefinitely on leave for the period of the war, as Wright's time is up in March or so and I don't think there is anybody else there who would be very satisfactory, so they may say that I must either keep to existing arrangements or go altogether. Then if Forbes insists on the probationary scheme I shall have to decide whether I can risk chucking up the E.I.R. before I have got a firm footing at home. But perhaps it won't come to that as I should think Forbes would be able to judge whether I was likely to be any good after three or four months, and as he said he would want me to start in about a month if I came to him, ~~that~~ the decision might be put off until shortly before my leave is up (October). It is rather complicated

however, as Upcott may say he will extend my leave
but without pay, which would probably make exis-
tence difficult. Also the housing problem is
made very troublesome by the probationary bond
as it would be too dangerous to leave a house
and buy furniture which might have to be abandoned
in a year. However nothing much can be done
until the actual offer is received and we shall
have to sit twitting until it comes.

Fondest love from all
to you and Miss Jones

Ever yours

Ralph

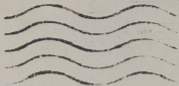
Fawcett Library
27 Wilfred Street
London S.W.1.

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BRIGHTON

9. 15 AM

10 MAR 18



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Miss Philippa Sturtevant

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Burley Hill

Ringwood

Hants
