

4710

24 Lansdowne Place

Horsham ~~27th~~

27th Feb 1916

My dearest Pippa,

I have started going round London hat in hand asking for employment, and the very first attempt has every appearance of being extraordinarily successful! I got Auntie, who is a dear friend of the Forbes family, to write to Sir William Forbes, the General manager of the L.B. & S.C. Ry, telling him that I was looking out for a job and asking if he could help in any way and give me an interview, which came off on Friday. He started by saying that what I wanted ~~is~~ was an extremely difficult thing to get in fact almost impossible. English railways greatly disliked taking in outsiders, and much preferred keeping things to them-

selves by promoting their own staff. Certainly they sometimes brought in General Managers from America but that was very exceptional. However he would not say that it was absolutely impossible for me to get something. "I suppose you don't expect to get an appointment of Chief Engineer straight off, but would be content with something humble, with prospects" I said yes, with limits to the humility. He said he meant about £700 or £800 to start with, which I said I thought I should be prepared to agree to. He then put me through a short cross examination on my career, asked how old I was what my present salary was (Ah, 2000 a year, that would be about as good as 1200 at home), and if I knew any Engineers in England who could speak for me. I trotted out Sir Alexander and Palmer. He seemed impressed with Sir A. and shouted for joy at the mention of F.P. Eventually he said that he had something in his

mind but could say no more than that for the present; that if it came off I might consider that I was in great good luck, but that as 90 per cent of the good things that happen to people are pure luck, there would be nothing extraordinary about that. Then he told me to send him a written statement of my Engineering experience, with references to names of Engineers who might be referred to about me, and that I should hear from him again, when perhaps I should have to see his Chief Engineer. It sounds very promising don't you think? He was very friendly and nice and not a bit like a bloated man of business trying to browbeat a would-be employer. In the middle of the interview his secretary came in with a letter and said "You wanted to speak about this too" and Sir W. said "Oh yes, are you any relation of Miss P. Strachey?" It appears that a lady friend of his has been trying to get some war work and was recommended to apply to you at Victoria Street, which she did but unfortunately you were not there.

I began hastily to say that I had only to utter one word and you would put her in command of Woolwich Arsenal, when he said that although you were away they had been very polite in your office and done everything possible, and he only mentioned it because the next letter that he opened after Auntie Bee's was one about Lady Somebody, widow of poor old Joe Somebody applying to you for work, and he thought the co-incidence was strange. I have sent him a beautiful history of my life proving conclusively that I am a Super. Brunel, and now await results. Margaret has already designed built and furnished a bijou residence in Hampstead and make out a list of guests for the house warming.

How are you getting on in the New Forest? Are you better and can you survive this beastly weather? I am going back to Oliver and Ray tomorrow for a week

Fondest love from all
yours
Ralph

BRIGHTON

10. — PM

27 FEB 16



Miss Philippa Stacey

Burley Hill

Ringwood

Hants

4710

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