

COPY.

M.S. "TEGELBERG"  
Between Singapore and Colombo.  
17th September 1945.

Dear Auntie Amy,

At last I have an opportunity to write you a letter in comfort. You must have found the last one a bit messy. We sailed two days ago on this ship; Dutch built and owned; 14,500 tons, Diesel engined, Goanese stewards. decorations not outrageously vulgar, and in fact about the nicest ship I have been on. She used to run from Batavia to S. Africa. Best of all she is extremely fast; now we are clear of the minefields the ships taking ex-prisoners-of-war to England, which all started roughly at the same time, are having a sort of race, which this ship expects to win. We are, I have heard, due in Southampton on October 10th, but neither date nor port are definite. I think I have done extraordinary well for myself in getting a passage on this particular ship. The only fault is that they insist on giving us very light food so as to break us poor starvelings in gently. This is rather funny as the starvation ended a month ago, and we have all been making pigs of ourselves ever since. However, representations are being made and I believe we shall be on full rations by Colombo. Anyway, the food is excellently cooked.

I spent the last two days before leaving tearing round at breakneck speed, mostly on the running boards of lorries which I hopped, seeing my troops to say goodbye to them before I and they left. They were living in four Camps all over the Island and for some reason it was made officially as difficult as possible for me to visit them. At every Camp I went to they gave me enormous meals of curry and chapatties; it was the first time in 3½ years they had had flour or ..... The last two days in particular were immense feasts because it was "Id" which is the Festival at the end of the Fast of Ramzan. This is observed by Indian Mussulmen when they hear by wireless from Delhi that the new moon has been seen. I had two "Id's" because the Camp I went to on the second day hadn't a wireless and got the news a day late. I was glad they that were all so happy as I myself felt rather miserable at leaving them. Quite apart from the great affection I have always had for them it is really astounding what they have endured in the cause of loyalty during their imprisonment. I shall tell you some grim things about this when we meet. The whole round of celebration finished on the quayside when I saw most of them off to India, together with nearly all our Officers, who have been with me very nearly all the time. Tony Trench (I think I have mentioned him) produced from somewhere a water-bottle full of Chinese Brandy, and I drank half of it. It was the first time I had been drunk for years; Heavens knows how I got back to Camp about 15 miles away. They went on board with further vast supplies of the stuff; the Regiment has always known how to look after itself.



I am busy putting the finishing touches to the philosophical treatise I have been writing. I don't intend, of course, to publish it but it will be interesting to see what my tutors make of it. I have written to the Master of Balliol asking if I can come up immediately after the Army lets me go, which I hope will be a few days after landing. I am looking forward tremendously to being a philosopher again after being a rather unsuccessful Army officer for so long. I don't think I shall find it hard to get straight down to work again.

I am doing my best to make my manners presentable before I get back. Don't be too hard on me if they are not perfect. All the Officers from the Regiment who are going straight home are with me and we all shout when we see one of us doing something he oughtn't at table. Somebody asked an incoming Naval Officer in Singapore whether we appeared to him sane; he answered that we did, but that he was doubtful if the same could be said of the members of the organisation which had come in to get us away. Still, they did pretty well. I never expected to be back so soon.

Looking forward to seeing you,

Love,

Dick.



COPY.

M.S. "TEGELBERG"

Gulf of Aden.

27th September 1945.

Dear Uncle Eric,

I expect by now you have seen my letter to Aunt Amy. It is marvellous to be able to write freely again. These parts are like a steamy Turkish bath at this time of year, but inappropriately enough, I have a cold in the head. This ship is extraordinarily comfortable, even though we have eight in a cabin intended for two; it is more commodious than many cabins I have been in carrying their normal complement. We were told that this ship did 20 knots, but up till now she hasn't even reached 16. I gather her cylinders are badly worn. However, we shall no doubt arrive on or about the 10th of October if we continue at the present rate. We call at Port Said and Gibraltar, but it isn't yet revealed for certain what is our port of destination. They probably haven't decided yet.

We have started getting a ration of beer (Murree) at a scale of one bottle a week (about). There is also talk of Whisky but it has not materialised yet. The food is "good plain" and we still are not allowed the full Army ration as the ship's M.O. thinks our poor stomachs won't take it. However, I am putting on about one pound each day and hope to be back to nearly normal weight before I arrive. Then I suppose I shall find you all heavily rationed. Here we get many things which I have heard you can't get in England; oranges, bananas, chocolate, and unlimited sugar. The only thing there is a shortage of is butter. They dope us with four multi-vitamin tablets and two mepaceine tablets a day; the former have made me feel full of beans in spite of the cold and the climate.

We had a rousing reception in Colombo; we sailed up to our berth between two lines of ships (the harbour was full to bursting), rather as if we were exercising the ~~N~~ Fleet, and they all hooted long and loud. I leapt ashore into the arms of a Brigadier and we were then issued with one F.A.N.Y., W.R.N. or other female in lieu, each, to take us round the town. Everything was "on the house" and both Officers and men had a wonderful time. Unfortunately we only stayed for an hour or two. We are really getting much more sympathy than we deserve, and revelling in it.

When I get home, I don't know what I shall do; it rather depends what port we land up at. If it were Southampton, for instance, I should come to you as soon as I could get clear of the Camp into which they will no doubt put us, and then go straight on the same day to Oxford to fix things up there, as Term will have already begun, and I shall have to look slippy if I am going to get rooms. All this is assuming that the Army will let me go straightaway and that Balliol will have me. In any case, I shall have much to ask your advice about before I take any definite steps.

Love, Dick.