

S. S. BALRANALD,

In the Redx Sea ,

Friday April 24th. 1931 .

My Dears,

It was an unexpected thrill to receive six letters from Home at Colombo. I did not expect to hear from you before reaching Port Said in two days time, but you evidently did some detective work and found when we called at Colombo and acted accordingly.

There is so little to do on board and so much time to do it in that I cannot attempt to reply to all of you who wrote to me individually. You see for one thing one forms very bad and slothful habits on board and for another I should have to write the same to all of you over and over again. So, as I know you will be foregoing some time this will be a "family letter"

First of all regarding our arrival in England. In the letters to Colombo, you mention coming up with the car to meet us at Tilbury and that I shall find Bob where I left him - on the dock at Tilbury - (not IN the dock I trust). I presume you will be able to find out from the papers or shipping Co. at what time we arrive and we shall be very glad indeed to see you there. Meta wants to meet you all first and not too many at a time, so that will please her better than the idea I have previously mentioned of landing at Plymouth. So - WE WILL LAND AT TILBURY UNLESS THERE IS SOMETHING TO THE CONTRARY IN ANY LETTERS FROM YOU AT PORT SAID OR MALTA.

As regards the luggage, I do not think your car will be able to carry it all. We have two cabin trunks, one large suitcase, two medium suitcases, three small suitcases, one typewriter, one kit bag, one hold-all, one tin trunk, one boiler containing wedding cake and sundry sundries. How we escaped paying excess luggage I don't know, especially as I have forgotten to enumerate two hatboxes in this list. Meta says that when you read this you will begin to throw fits wondering where we are going to put it all at home, but if you could see the small cabin in which most of it was stowed you would not worry so much. However you can at least take the urgently wanted things and the others -if any- can follow by carrier. It is very kind of you to offer to do so.

We are very glad indeed that Basil and Edna will not be leaving Elfordleigh because we are coming home. We would hate to turn them out, especially as we do not know how long we shall be staying there and we shall, I am sure, be a very happy family together. I am sure we can be quite comfortable in "Gladys's room".

Just before we reached Fremantle I wrote 7 pages to you and very interesting it is too. Then I found that it was useless posting it there as it would follow us home so I have not finished that letter. As I intend sending this by air mail from Egypt - if possible - I will not send that with this letter owing to the expense. It may not be possible to get the air mail with this as we arrive in Port Said on Sunday and I shall be unable to get Egyptian stamps perhaps and they may not accept air mail on board.

Miss Thresher - Auntie Nettie W is sailing from London on May 9th - two days after we reach it and we are wondering whether we shall be able to see her. We very much want to and Meta wishes to send some presents home by her. So far as we know she will be staying with Miss Dixon, her friend at Sutton, Surrey but we are not sure if she is still there. If she is we would like to be able to run over and see her the day after we get home if it can be arranged. We will write her by this mail and will ask her to let you know where we can perhaps get in touch with her. It might suit her better to run down to Woking. We will ask her to let YOU know what suits her best as we don't want to miss her by not hearing from her in time. Any arrangements you make will suit us.

I will not attempt to give you any news in this part of the letter but will try to finish off the news part separately. and post it under separate cover if we can send this by air.

I will just add that we are both well in spite of the heat of the past fortnight and are glad to find a nice cool breeze in the dreaded Red Sea which makes things quite comfortable. We forgot to bring a stone to throw in to see what it becomes.

A week next Thursday - we are getting quite excited and Meta is beginning to feel that very soon she must face the ordeal of meeting her "in laws."

With best love from both of us to all of you,

*Meta Bertie*

April 25th.

P.S. We were honoured yesterday by being asked up to the Commander's cabin for a cocktail before lunch. We enquired what time we would get to Tilbury but he won't know for some days yet. He says the best thing for you to do is to write or phone to the P. & O. Branch Line Office in London. They will know exactly when the ship is due and where to meet it. This is better than relying on the papers as the ship may be delayed by fog or any other cause.

*over*

