[Handwritten at the top]
Please send on to
Peter
Eastbourne Aunts
Aunt Edith
Paul

On Board T.S.S. DEUCALION.
Philippine Islands.
Oct. 17th. 1940.

Dear Everyone,
We are on our way from Dahica to Sebu. It is a bright moonlight night, and we are passing between lovely little islands covered with palms and dangele trees. (You know just as much as I do about dangele trees, so I'm not going to explain what they are). I did some fishing at Dahica, and caught about twenty all-sorts, including three nice bass. There were a number of sharks about, and they bit off seven of my hooks. I hope to get some copper wire for next time. One of the crew caught a shark, but it was only a wee one; I shouldn't think it could have bitten off much more than one big toe, even if hungry.

We have got a thousand tons of eggs on board. I had two for breakfast. I do not know if it is the eggs, or whether it was living like an S.P.G. missionary for this past month, but my hair has suddenly come all over soft and glossy, like Pharaoh's seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favoured. I must certainly take my namesake's wise advice, and spend all the time I can on board storing up in my interior barn for the lean years ahead. There is, however, no extant evidence <u>proving</u> that the Joseph of Pharaoh's time was definitely C.M.S. All we can say for certain is that he entered into a short-term agreement for a period of four hundred years, and was thus 3000 years ahead of his time in missionary methods.

To-night at dinner, a crumb tried to go the wrong way down the Chief Engineer's throat, thus proving that it was 6 billion years behind its time, since at that early date there was only one way down. It is only, really in quite recent times that the human constitution has adopted the Reich Minister, of Transport's system of having two separate lanes, one [Page 2] for slow and one for fast moving traffic.

We must be Men And Women Of Our Time. I am sure you all realise the importance of that even more than I do myself. In fact, thank you for correcting me: I might have thought it was more important just to be Men And Women Of <u>Time</u>, seeing there are so many who pretend to be living in Eternity. An eternity of boredom.

...This morning at breakfast, I mentioned to the Chief Engineer that we seemed to be heading straight for one of the islands, and I hoped
the ship had got good brakes. "They are all best Ferodo lined", he replied. I asked him whether he had made sure of that fourteen years ago, when tradition
had it he last went down into the engine-room. But Mr. Oldridge said he had shamed him into going down the night before.

I saw a flying-fish doing a hundred yards in the air this morning. Fair beetling along, it was.

To-day is Nii-Name Sai in Japan, or the day when the Emperor tastes the new season's rice. I hope he will have a good tuck in, bless him. Just now, most of his subjects are having to eat imported Siamese rice, which is very bad for their tummies; you'd be surprised. But someone in Japan has just invented a new good-for-the-tummy imitation rice. “Necessity is the mother of Imitation”, as they say in Japan. I have got some razor blades, bought in Japan, which have “VALET” stamped on them, but if you look more closely, you will find that the “V” has two little twiddles, one on each side, making it look like an “M”, and the “L” is made to look like an “E”. Well, well, they do say that “Imitation is the sincerest form of Flattery”, although a cruel, but very famous person, (I must leave you to guess who), was heard once to add, “and the surest sign of incompetence”.

Just before I left, Akutagawa San wrote to say that in [Page 3] view of the imminent cessation of grants from England, owing to the decision of the Japanese Church to become self-supporting, he was planning to pay his way by keeping goats. Yesterday I wrote to him, and ventured to remark how appropriate it was to feed his spiritual sheep by means of material goats. Bless them all.

This evening we have been coming into Cebu port. In a lovely sunset we steamed along, with palm-trees lining the shore on either side. As we neared the wharf, the pilot's launch came alongside, and the stout little pilot jumped on to the rope ladder and climbed aboard. Now we are steaming slowly in to our berth. They are big, up-to-date wharves, and there are some other large ships lading too. We are to take on a load of copra here, and some hemp, and then go straight to Singapore. We should be there six days from now, and there we shall sit, like owls in the wilderness, till some passing vessel, some schooner, wherry or dhow, heave to and take us off.

The flying fish have been having a rare old time. It seems that they take to their wings only when the ship comes uncomfortably near to them to them, and then they give one leap and off they go. I timed some of them, and found that the average flight lasted just ten seconds, and in that time they do a nice 100 yards.

Intimidant prorae; velas praecincta pavore,
Caeruleo volitant Aethere monstra maris.

The ship's prow threatens. Girt with sails in fear,
Flit through the sky the monsters of the deep.

Greenwood took me to have a drink to-day, (believe me; it was only COCO COLA), at a “dive” on the water-front here, called “Susan's Bar”, and Susan was there herself. She slapped me on the knee, and demanded why [Page 4] I hadn't been at the dance the night before. A Norwegian sailor came in, drunk, but not noisily drunk, and asked for another wee drop. But Susan, ascertaining that he had only ten centavos, discreetly advised him against it, whereupon he vehemently questioned her fondness for him; to which she replied that it lay elsewhere, a personal reference, I fear. Verily, a loveless

life, be it beautiful withal, is but a forlorn thing, yet doth it appear fair and blessed beside that which doth woo counterfeit love, that kindleth the soul but to sear it with barren despair.

Cebu is an olde, strange place. To-night, I passed by the castle walls, that tell of the grim rule of ancient Spain. Across the harbour stands a monument to the ever glorious memory of Magellan, the hero of the straits. And it marks the spot where he was killed. Yet such is the perversity of History that of recent years has been erected nearby a more splendid and costly memorial, dedicated to the ever more glorious memory of the man who slew him, the first to strike a blow for freedom against the proud invader of these fair islands.

And there are old churches, too. To-night I wandered up to the vast western porch of one of them. The interior was dimly lit, but the door yielded not to my entreaty. I wandered further along, to what may have been the monastery buildings, or some ancient Hostel of God. The gates were ajar, and brightly lit, and over the portal was the legend:
“Ano Domini 1525”, and the words: “In nomine Ejus omne genu flectabitur”. And I thought of the two or three I knew had knelt there the day before. I went further passing along the narrow, unlit streets, looking into the openrooms of the rich and the poor, into huts where families were eating their bowl-fuls of corn by candlelight, into lofty upper rooms, where the light shone through the delicate carving separating room from room, and traced slender patterns on the ceiling. And then as I wandered, I [Page 5] came to an alley, at the farther end of which was a blaze of many-coloured lights, enchanting the eye, and inviting the stranger to approach. So into the alley I turned, past the gaming-tables, and the gaze of playing children; and as I came nearer, I saw that the bright lights were illuminating the figures of Angels, and of Mary the Mother and the Child Jesus. And there were men sitting there, young men and old men, all drest in white.
It was as if I had entered the Middle Ages, unawares. “In Nomine Ejus omne genu...”, I said to myself, and there was a good piece of ground there, so I knelt and crossed myself. For when you are in the Middle Ages, it is only right and reverent to do as they did then.

And so out again into the unlit streets, and the mixed crowds of humanity. And I, who a moment before had been wondering why they were there at all, thought to myself that they were all busy weaving. And they could all choose their own warp, but there was the warp of Redemption set before them, and some of them were busy weaving their woof upon it, with the shuttle of a good heart.

...This morning, we were to have sailed at seven o'clock, but when I went on deck at half-past we were still alongside, and the Customs man told me we were not leaving till nine. “Why not go to the Cathedral?” he said, So off I went. It was a big, beautiful building, and when I reached it, men women and children, hundreds of them, were coming away. They had been to the seven o'clock service, and there had been two before that, but church was full again for service to follow. There was a sermon, in Spanish, I think; and then I had to go. And so I left Cebu, at worship.

Words, winged words. And words that are not winged. What terrible things they are. Not to play with fire and not to play with sharp knives we all know, but who is our

teacher to tell us not to play with words, which are a hundred fold more dangerous than both. And the pity of [Page 6] it is that few know the dole-full destruction they do wreak. Yet, dangerous tho' they be, there is no mastery so great and glorious as the mastery of them. To take them and tame them, to bend them to one's will, and send them, sure and faithful messengers, into the unruly world of spirit, this is the mastery of masteries, the kingly crown and sceptre of them all. It sits aloof from that mean slavery that calls a winged word to do its will, and too late finds ‘tis barb’d, and venom’d too.

“Tea, please!” We lie sprawling in our bunks, and the timid voice of the Chinese servant calls us to the saloon to partake of delicate refreshment. “Tea, please!” ... no winged word, that. It is the pleading voice of the humble ones, that, all unknowing, strikes deeper than the sword of hate, and draws heart's blood for tears. So, till pride be ebb'd away quite, let bleed, and still let bleed.

Joe