

India, on the way to Madras,

March 29, 1921.

Dearest Margaret,

Yesterday we went ashore at Colombo and found your cable at the consulate. I am delighted to know that the event is safely over, and that the much-desired boy has arrived. Your telegram was of necessity brief, but I hope that there are no reservations in the little word "well", and that you and the baby and the children are all well and happy. As I expect to sail from Colombo for Freemantle about the eleventh, I can hardly expect any letters written after the event.

I do hope that you suffered little, and that the discomforts afterward were not severe, and that the baby is big and fat and entirely satisfactory. We must try from the beginning to avoid dietary errors, so as to avoid any developmental handicaps from that source.

Doubtless you received my cable of yesterday congratulating you and incidentally letting you know that I had received the message in Colombo. I should have tried to write to you, but we took no room in the hotel for the hours we were there, and I was not alone a minute.

I am writing to Mother about Father's death in January. I presume you have a letter of particulars which I can answer on my return to Brisbane. Father rounded out ~~the years of~~ a life of four-score years in a most remarkable way, considering his sicknesses. I wonder what Mother intends to do. I suppose she will first visit around and get thoroughly rested after the years of caring for an invalid and the special strain of the last illness.

Your good letter of March 2nd was at the consulate in Colombo. Also the letters from Gertrude and Ruth. I am glad that the rose crop in the Botanic Gardens is so large this year. I am also pleased to note that Ruth is becoming proficient in the difficult feat of writing backwards. Tell them both that I liked their letters very much, and hope they are having a very good time. I can understand that Peggy is having her time filled with dentistry and school and can hardly be expected to write.

And so the Elkingtons are off on their long trip at last. I can imagine the excitement, and I can also imagine you taking care of the chickens intermittently, unless they disposed of them finally.

It is encouraging to know that Dr. Burnell made a favorable impression on you. I cannot help wondering whether he has the vision to do big things. It will be very disappointing if we cannot develop a few real good health men out of the staff of the Hookworm Campaign.

It is a relief to know that Dr. Lambert was to sail for Raboul on March 5th, as there were so many things that might have interfered with the plans.

I am not sorry that I missed the End of the Road, and I am glad that it was successful. I wonder if you met the man who brought it over and who wrote to me several times about it.

By this time you have doubtless completed the reform of the Women's College and are looking for new fields to conquer. I shall be interested to hear how the conservatives took to your plan, whatever it was.

I am glad that the annual report seemed to be in fair shape and met with your approval. I am even more glad to know that it is on its way at last.

Isn't it nice that Mrs. Palmer is doing well. She is of a type that I should expect ~~to~~ ~~xxxx~~ would brood a great deal after a misfortune, but I may be wrong.

We arrived off Colombo about eleven o'clock on the evening of March 27. With the help of the beautiful moonlight and the shore lights, the pilot took us inside the breakwater, where we were moored to buoys at the end of a long row of vessels. Colombo does not possess docks, strange as it may seem, and everything has to be carried on lighters. We were waked up in the small hours of the morning to show our passports, and we were up again at six to get ready to go ashore. We were taken ashore in a rowboat, and had to go a long distance between long rows of steamers decorated in honor of the Japanese Crown Prince. While the oarsmen were moving our boat along toward the pier we could see the Japanese war ships that had anchored outside the breakwater and could hear the guns booming salutes. The pier was all decorated with palms and plants and carpeted with rugs, and uncomfortable-looking people were hurrying hither and thither in frock ~~XXXX~~ coats and top hats. Some wore frock coats and helmets, and it was suggested that the ~~XXX~~ top hats were too few to go round and that they would be worn in relays, - but this was merely surmise.

I could not get Dr. Heiser interested in standing about to see the Crown Prince ride by, and so I missed him.

Dr. Jacocks, who has charge of the Board's work in Ceylon, found us at Cook's when we were getting our tickets for India. He is a pleasing type of southerner with characteristic accent.

In Colombo the traveler is besieged with small traders, who would seize and drag him into their shops if they could. As it is one would like to look at their wares, but they make it so unpleasant that you hardly dare show the slightest interest. You should have seen them go after the Japanese sailors when they came ashore in their natty white uniforms. I saw a native seize one embarrassed officer by the hand and pull him over to his shop. The Indians look so wretched and miserable, and they base their appeal for money largely on exciting pity. The rickshaw men are sombre and unlike the grinning Chinese cooly of Singapore.

We took the train at 7:30 for India. We had a good sleeper and dining car in Ceylon. At 5:30 A.M. we were routed out and given tea, and about an hour later we took the ferry for India. The train we are now in will be our home until we reach Madras to-morrow morning. We had breakfast in a little railway restaurant, where we had a six-course table-d'hote ~~meal~~ ~~breakfast~~, while a punkah was being agitated over us by a rope that passed through the wall.

We have passed many sand dunes and are now among some rice fields. Lots of love to you, my dear, brave Sweetheart,

W. Allen