

256 West 22nd St
New York
June 2nd - '50

Laurie Dear: Wasn't I a meanie not to write you from England! Truth to tell I hardly wrote anybody even a post-card. We stayed so briefly in each place, it was imperative to get to bed very early in order not to be all worn out by so much seeing & travelling, & one was always putting off until "Manana" the letters one wanted to write.

Anyhow - the trip was a wonderful success from beginning to end, & we're both so glad we went - & when we did. Hardly any tourists about & in many spots we were the first Americans to appear out of the blue. The first flight was exciting, & not too tiring, though we detoured to Goose Bay, Labrador, en route, where there was still about a foot of snow on the ground.

In London we were met at the airport by friends of Alice's, Mr & Mrs Heath, who drove us in a rattly old jalopy to their cosy little home in Streatham (on the southern outskirts of London). Raining when we arrived, but it cleared beautifully on Sunday, & they drove us up north of the city to a Friends Meeting House in the tiny village of Chalfont St Giles, where we attended meeting, lunched, & then wandered in the greenest fields you ever saw, among perfectly tame sheep & their darling lambs, over carpets of daisies, primroses & blue-bells. Near the great beech-woods there were tiny soft English robins, so tame they'd eat out of your hand! What a lovely introduction to English countryside it was! Next day we were off to Plymouth, via dear old Exeter (remember?), where we spent a night. During our three days in Plymouth I saw all I could of Veril Birch, as merry & amusing as ever, & still holding her job directing a fine Army-Navy Men's Club - the NAAFI: A cluster of quonset huts, erected on the rubble of a block of buildings razed by the Blitz. Poor old Plymouth - she certainly took an

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awful beating. The inhabitants shabby & ill-fed, but stolid carrying on with cheer & good-humor. We stayed in a fantastic old boarding-house set in a lovely old-world garden within a stone's throw of the dramatic & windswept Hoe. One day Veril joined us on a bus-trip into Cornwall. It was a heavenly day, & we visited both Polperro & Looe (fishing-villages tinner & more picturesque than we saw at Penzance!). Alice was almost beside herself at the charm of the tiny white-washed houses stuck like swallow's nests against the cliffs around the little harbors.

From Plymouth, we went on up to Gloucester, stopping en route at Bath, where two hours quite sufficed us. No one ever mentions Gloucester as a "must", but we found the Cathedral & its surrounding "close" perfectly enchanting, & longed to stay more than our two nights. Had thought of a side-trip to see Yintern again, but A. was so content sketching about the Cathedral I hadn't the heart to drag her away. Nor had I any desire to visit Stratford on the way to Chester, but she rose at the screech o' dawn & caught a "milk train" there, rejoining my ^{later} train at Birmingham. Chester was quaint, as all the guide books promised, & it was fun to stroll about on its old walls. But we didn't linger more than 24 hrs as we were pining to get on up to the Lake country. On the long trip up there a kind English lady graciously shared her lunch with us (as the train had no diner). She embarrassed us almost to tears by her expressions of gratitude to us Americans for Lend-Lease. And the tears did come when she said "It's good of you to come & see us when we're so shabby." (!)

And she wasn't the only one. Everywhere we went people were so friendly, so helpful, so thoughtful of our comfort, & so appreciative of our appreciations.

Absolutely none of the stiffness & stuffiness you & I encountered so often! And the countryside, with its tiny villages set in the greenest of ~~set~~ valleys - sheep & contented cows everywhere. Gournes, the small lake village where we (and Wordsworth) stayed, was a

little bit of heaven. Our old house (not built or run as a hotel) perched on a hill among glorious trees & looking over the lake to the craggy hills all about, was like something out of a book, & so were the family who were our hosts. The sun shone in a cloudless sky for all of our four days, & we simply hated to leave. Alice got in some real, scrambling climbs, while I contented myself with wanders along footpaths nearer the lakes, three of which we visited. Thence to Scotland, where the scenery grew more rugged with each mile, & red-tiled roofs gave way to slate roof & grey stone buildings. Edinburgh is truly a magnificent old city - grim & grimy as to its tall old buildings, but with such vistas & such variety in its varied levels - many streets so steep no horse or car could get up or down. We stayed at the Old Waverley, right on Princes St near the Scott Monument, & looking across to the heights crowned by the Castle. "Eve" Julian Allan no longer lives in town, but shares a lovely house, garden & studio with a friend, Madge Ferguson. They're out in Balerno - a pretty suburb not far from the Pentland Hills. I spent the better part of three days out there with them, talking old-times & "shop" with Julian, & helping her with the anatomy of a charming quiet seated Orpheus which she's doing to order for someone's garden. She's more lovely than ever, & we had a fine reunion, though the weather was cold & rainy & her studio so damp & drilly I caught a cold I haven't gotten rid of yet!

Alice, meantime, made several side trips of her own, & one day we took a bus-side up into the Grassacks gorgeously powdered with fresh snow, & around Loch Lomond. After a week in Edinburgh (it wasn't nearly long enough) - we were off down the East side of England. Durham was enchanting: Cathedral & Castle crowning a "sugar-loaf" hill ringed about within the loop of a quiet little river. The old town clung to the sides of the hill - & on some of the upward lanes we literally had to scramble on all fours! Eliot had done quite

time? "I shoulda stood in England -"

book, & am wondering whether you are now in Warwick's country? Had tea with Jilly Solly in London. She's aging & forgetting much, but as dear as ever.

Have thought a lot about you & Betty & the new Love, Brenda.

a lot of sketching there last summer, & we wished we had time and ability to do the same. But after 2 days we had to move on to York, which, though very different, was equally beguiling: white & gleaming & lacy, where Durham was hoary & gray. York Cathedral is a perfect gem, & the windows (removed during the war) were almost all back in place. They were the first genuine fine old glass Alice had seen, & she was thrilled with the iridescent light that glowed on the piers & columns. York also had walls - not red stone, like Chester's, but a lovely warm white.

Disappointed in Lincoln, after York, but who wouldn't be? Made up for that by a day in Cambridge, wandering along the gentle rivers of the "Backs", where every gigantic beech or horse-chestnut tree was a cathedral in itself - and spending over two hours studying the glass & exquisite "fan" ceiling of Kings College Chapel.

Hence to our quaint old "hotel" on a Bloomsbury crescent in London. Building & furniture shabby & forbidding, but our two Scotch sister hostesses proved perfectly charming, cultured women, musical & theatrical-minded, and we really had a grand final week with them. Could only scratch the surface of endless London, but we did see British Museum, Nat'l Gallery & Portrait Gallery; St Pauls in its great expanse of war-devastation (a ghastly sight, even after all these years) - Went down to Kew Gardens last Sunday (Whitarn) after service at Westminster Abbey. Thousands & thousands of people out holidaying in perfect weather, yet not a single loose paper or orange-peel marred the beauty of the grass, - not a flowerbed trampled or twig broken! What civilized people are the British! Even during rush-hour in the underground, no crowding, shoving, pushing. No loud chatter. Everyone thoughtful of the rights of others. Gee - they're wonderful! And the babies are all diabolical! Flying home was pretty tedious, - 19 hrs cramped in a seat that was built for other dimensions than mine left me kinda limp, but have recovered now.

Have called up both casters & carvers, but nothing doing yet on finishing the Washington job. Wonder what the snag is this