

Such a warm welcome - a
 climbing into a little rattly car -
 and she herself driving up to the
 MANOR - a great stone house
 with dignity bordering on grimness
 outside - but were taken into a
 Library which was like the lady -
 open-hearted, with a fire burning, deep
 comfy chairs - a great working
 desk (rather pitted) photographs
 everywhere and host of all kinds
 telling of friendships and local
 faces - opening into a ^{high} walled
 garden with roses everywhere -
 a little dog (much like Kitty Symm's)
 called "Beetons" scampering ahead -
 with a "Pim #1" on Tray - a
 little Heaven of a room.

Scotland

Oranmore House
 Sunday morning
 8.30 am.

Dearest.

I have had my tea and am
 lying in bed, looking out over such fairy
 loveliness that words fail me to attempt
 to describe it - a quiet Loch, with
 tall, dark mountains on the yonder
 shore - and the other way looking
 out to the Sea. It is all on the Baronial
 scale, but so wild in its beauty that
 it would refuse to be called an
 "estate". And so Miss Astley refuses
 any word to describe her - I shall
 never cease trying to get her in pictures
 however. She is a rugged individualist.

3. magic in this country and we
had acquired a kind of Royalty by
being passengers for Beasdale. I hardly
knew what to expect - whether it would
be a coach-in-four or a Rolls Royce -
I imagine my delight to find the Lady
herself and a dear young woman looking
not unlike a young Daisy Hitch -
I lost my heart completely - these
creatures do not belong to this
world - They wear their hats as
They please - and They evidently
did not please for they had none on.
I imagine Miss Astley has dressed
the name in entire life and I can't
imagine her changing - They are her
clothes as though they grew out of her
as leaves - or grass or trees -

2. as tall and dark and craggy
as her own mountains and as quiet
and lovely as the Loch this morning in
the sun. She is a Helen Strickman who
was born and lived free - who is
her own manager, who has her own
people, school, church and
who is father and mother to them
all. Not in any soft sweetness, but
in the essential oil of kindness. ~~How~~
can I begin? I must begin at the beginning.

The train ride is worthy of a trip from
any part of the world - especially the small
train that comes from Ft. William to Mallaig
winding in and out around the
Lochs and mountains - away from
the last edges of civilization. The
very name of Miss Astley-Nicholson is

8.

we kneel and humbly on my knees -
 Oh my dearest Tom, I have touched a rare
 existence here - one that makes the stuff
 we weave ours with seem shadowy & unreal.
 But the hand that weaves is neither -

There is none of the curse of a Rich MAN'S
 estate here - how it cocoones it I can't explain -
 nor any of the preciousness which often comes
 with isolation. During the war it was turned
 over to the Training for the Underground work -
 one has the feeling that They allow themselves
 to be freely used - but that They have no need
 to use the world. Oh John.

Phyllis is in a state of ecstasy - we have
 regal rooms, baths ect. One whole little caravan,
 cameras, bags and all - could be absorbed
 without even a ripple - also all of us. How
 she would love you (tho you she would
 see anyway) - and Burns and Erica -
 Oh I miss you all - my beloved family.

5.

Her kindly eye Touched on my
 tiredness and blessed me -
 we walked in the garden, we
 talked of many things - it
 was as though we had known
 each other always.

Dinner was at eight - in
 a great room - perfectly cooked
 and served - yet with a complete
 abandon of formalities - this is
 an art only learned by a life-time
 is one way of living as the free live.
 She has the strength and equality of
 a man - yet the humor and kindness
 of the mother of all men (and perhaps
 a little scorn of them). They tell tales

7. I shall try always, to re-construct it for you - But oh dearest one - I shall regret that you were not here to share it with me. One would need to be here in the dark winter months - in storm and fog and wind to catch the glory that one feels to be here. Also in the Lady, one feels the pain in the beauty of her face. It is not always sunshine here - I am thankful for a camera that can record the mist as well as the sunshine. I find myself longing for the cool, grey light - imagine that! The awful necessity to translate some of this rare flavour into pictures - I can't describe it - and it leaves

6. that she knows more than any manager she has. Everything is on the great scale here - yet it has been so long in existence - and it so far exceeds any and all other company that it makes its own complete world - it has no concern with "making a living" - it is a living.

My camera fairly itches to be used - to look this way and that, for everywhere are pictures. She herself the greatest. Keep this letter - written from this little glimpse into Paradise. Out of it - with pictures and words