

2 October 1941

Dear Haze,

As I have a minute to spare, I will commence a letter to you, which I have intended to do for some time.

I see you have left the Bank and are carrying on the full-time job of wife and mother-to-be Haze. Congratulations, and all the best of luck. It must be a thrill for you, and I quite imagine how pleased you'll be, and the rest of your family. You'll get a great kick out of having your own home after being at the bank for so long, as it is rather too much to do both jobs, although often of course it is the only way. I also hope Andy makes a success of his new job – it is a big change from chemistry, but no doubt he'll make a go of it, and when we come back home we'll find him the big businessman! He'll have to put on a bit of weight, though, to look the successful businessman as usually they're quite rotund, which I can never imagine Andy as being.

You won't be far from N.P. now, Haze, and will be able to pop up and see everything more frequently, especially without the ties of the bank.

How is Rae? I wrote to her quite a long while ago, but didn't hear if she received my letter. It is amazing how few letters from home seem to have gone astray for both John and I, and he has received all the parcels you people have sent him, all neatly sewn up in cloth. Quita's was the last to arrive, but he hasn't seen that yet, as it was re-addressed to me, and I'm keeping it for him when he comes down this weekend. But letters too seem to have arrived in a steady flow, and I appear to have received every letter my family have written me for many months past. It is good news to know that, as it just shows how much shipping is coming through.

You know, I suppose, that John has become a corporal. The main thing is that he is much happier in his present job, and he sees a chance of getting further, whereas six months or so again he was in despair of ever getting out of being an A.C.1.

I see him pretty frequently, as he gets a 48-hour leave once a fortnight, and comes down to Weybridge to see me, and then sometimes he comes down even for a day or an hour or two if he can get away. He has a motorbike now, as you probably know, and skips around the countryside on that. He has it pretty 'hot' and is very proud of it, considering it only cost him a fiver, and already he had had several offers of twenty pounds for it. As he can get down so easily, I don't bother to go to Cambridge as accommodation is very difficult in small towns now on account of business and people being evacuated there.

You'd find housekeeping a great problem over here, Haze, and you'd also find preparing for a baby a great hardship too, as coupons for babies are not issued until they are born, and so you have to buy all the first clothes with your own coupons, and believe me they run into quite a lot of coupons. And then there is the difficulty of not being able to get oranges etc. for them, although of course, milk is guaranteed for babies. However, I suppose on the whole, it can be managed, although it all makes it more worrying for a mother. And then it is not right for babies to be kept in London, as even though we aren't having raids at present, they'll come alright, and then the kiddies will suffer. I feel very sorry for mothers over here, as they must find it a full-time job to get food etc. and in the early part of the season, they had to stand in queues waiting for ½lb. of tomatoes, and sometime ago even potatoes were almost impossible to get, and there would be long queues for them. It must be a very trying business at times, and I've often been thankful I haven't had to worry about rationing, as that is all done for me, and of course when John comes down, he gets fed in the same way. He also gets a ration card for every leave he has, but he doesn't need to give it up at the school, so we get the stuff we want, such as sugar and butter, and have that as extra, and he can always wangle a pot of jam or marmalade, by making up to a girl in Selfridges! If there is anything to be got, John gets it by hook or by crook, and I have him to thank for chocolate and sometimes even oranges, which I would not otherwise taste.

You probably would be very surprised at the difference in your brother, Haze. He has grown a very large moustache, as you probably noticed from the snap he sent you, and he is quite proud of it. It is red, but he kids himself it suits him, and as all the girls tell him it does, he keeps it! He'll be growing a beard next, if he had a chance.

Pure silk stockings are a thing of the past here, Haze, as I gather they will be at home too. And to get a nice pair of artificial silk fully fashioned hose, one has to pay about 7/11d. You can get cheaper stockings, but they aren't nearly so good, and the lisle I don't like at all. At the end of last winter they were showing a lot of brightly coloured lisle and wool stockings, but I doubt if they take on, especially for town wear, although they would be ideal for the country.

Shoes and clothes as a whole have gone up tremendously in price, but there is such a vast difference between the cheap stuff and the good, that it pays to buy the better stuff and pay the high price. Coats that before the war would be though very good at five guineas, have now leapt up to the ridiculous price of 12 to 14 guineas, and yet people buy them, probably because they have more money now and also because of their wearing hopes, although I can't possibly see how there can be that huge difference in the price tag of things. Before the war, a pair of shoes at 30/- were a good well-cut pair, but today you have to pay 45/- and more for the same thing. I saw some very nice little frocks in Fenwicks, certainly a good shop, today, and they were ten guineas, and just light-weight woollen frocks too.

I suppose John told you we had intentions of visiting Mrs Ellis's sister in Moreton for the last week of our holiday, but Mr Nickelsen was taken ill at the last minute, but luckily he is better now. I haven't met

them yet, but John certainly was made welcome for the first Xmas he spent in England, and they gave him a jolly good time.

We ended up by going to Newcastle to stay with an uncle of mine, and although the weather was poor, we enjoyed the rest and the home comfort we can't get at the school.

Have you heard from Westie lately? We haven't had a word for many months, so I hope he is alright. The last news we had he was in Kenya, but letters from there seem to take longer than letters from home, so doubtless a letter is on its way somewhere. He must be hating the life by now, unless of course he has managed to get to Egypt and be with some of the N.Z. crowd. How he would love to get home and be made a fuss of – he should never have left home as he likes home comforts too much.

We heard the news about Trev. Bellringer too, and I do hope he is a prisoner of war. I don't suppose you've heard whether any further news has come through about Gordon Saunders. We had a cutting from home to say he was posted as missing, and that seems fairly definite unfortunately.

We've had a bad year of weather all told this year, Haze, and I'd give lots to be able to set sail for home now (with John of course) and arrive in time for your summer. The weather here would get the better of me eventually, as it is a long struggle against the elements. John has felt it too, and I think the weather combined with the bad conditions at the camp during last winter, help to knock him up, as he has been bad with bronchitis this last week, and had to see the M.O. He says he suspected he has had touches of it quite often during the past year, and there is no doubt that this wretched climate has done it. There is so much dampness hanging about all the time Haze, that it eats right into one, and we have had more than our fair share of it this year. Apart from the dampness, there have been sudden changes from heat to cold, and that does a lot of harm. No, I'm convinced that unless the weather at home has undergone a severe change during the past three years, I'd rather have our Wellington and N.P. weather any day than this. I myself have been unable to get rid of a head cold for the past two months, and have been having injections from a Dr. whom John knows through the Lodge, in an endeavour to clear them up, but unfortunately he doesn't seem to have succeeded, although it may be too early to tell. Still, I'd rather be over here, than go back without John! I wouldn't dream of going back home now, that is until the war is over.

A few shows are beginning to make their appearance in London again, although the latest starts at 6.15 and so enable folk to get to their homes before it is too late. This time last year we were in the midst of those terribly heavy raids, but it seems so far off now, that it is almost unbelievable, and yet we lived through it all and came to work.

Churchill has been warning us to expect anything, and says we don't know in the least what their plans are, and that they could attack us at the same time as they made a big attack in Egypt etc. I certainly think they must have tremendous forces ready to throw into a mighty sweep, but I doubt if

they'd attempt it before spring, and then I hope we can take the initiative, but we've got a lot worse to look forward to than we have had so far.

I believe Phyllis's husband, Frank Grey, has joined up with the R.A.F. or rather he was due to go in a few weeks when the family last wrote to me. He has been dead keen to become a pilot and has tried several times, but his age has been against him until recently.

We've had quite an abundance of fruit during the last couple of months, and we've sure made up for the lack of it over the winter months. I've been particularly fortunate in being at Weybridge, as we have rather a large orchard there, and when no-one is looking, it is a simple matter to fill one's pockets, and so John and I both had fruit galore. I went blackberrying one day down near the school, and made 4lb. of jam with sugar I had by me, and it tasted grand after having only bought jam, which is mainly marrow these days. I would have liked to have made more, but most fruits have been so expensive that it is impossible to buy them – even blackberries were about 2/6d. a lb. before they were controlled, and then they disappeared altogether. Blackcurrants were unobtainable, but this Dr. I go to told me they were all gathered and made into a certain juice extract for the children, which is supposed to be better for them than oranges, so that is one good thing, and if the kiddies get them, I don't mind missing them. Apples are controlled at 9d. lb. and won't be less. Peaches are 2/6d. each, and of course apricots, grapes etc. are only for the very rich. However, so long as we can get apples even, that is enough.

John has been buying himself a few clothes, as already they have gone up a lot, and the quality is getting poorer with every new supply. However, he has got two sports coats and some decent slacks, so thinks he will be thoroughly happy to live in sports clothes, if there is nothing else after the war. It will pay him, though, to get a fairly good stock of good clothes in, as there is no doubt there is no comparison between the tailors here and those at home. As John says at home they must cut them out with a knife and fork, and until you come over here and see the difference, you'd hardly credit it. The London men are certainly the best-dressed I've seen yet, and the good suits are perfectly made and cut. Men's clothes don't go out of fashion so quickly, either, so a chap can afford to lay in quite a good supply. Personally I think the good shoes here are much superior in fit to those at home, but I think John isn't so sure about men's shoes. Perhaps he has been unlucky, but I myself think the women's shoes are much better in fit here.

We were going down to Winchester this weekend to stay with an uncle and aunt of a French pal of John's, but the old man was taken ill this week, so of course we're not going. It would have made a pleasant change, and John gets a lot of fun out of this Frenchman. He and his pal would have gone down there on the bike, and I should have had to go by train. John and I may come up to London on Saturday to see a show in the West-end as it is well over a year since we've seen one, and they are usually well worth seeing. I often wish I was living nearer to town as we could go often, but 20 miles is a long way to travel, and takes up such a good slice of the day in travelling time.

Well, Haze, I am coming to the end of the page and can't add much more. I don't know if John will want to slip in a note – he'll probably seize the opportunity of just writing a few words – but I'll say cherrio [unsigned].