

## **Summary -**

Letter 1, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1915

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### **Letter 1, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1915**

IMG 0326

*Note squeezed in at the top – hard to read*

Nicolay – sitting alongside at this table – sends his best salaams – says “Come out here soon – and explore some German trenches”.

c/o 2<sup>nd</sup> (K.E.O.) Gurkhas  
Indian Expeditionary Force.  
France,

My dear Bailey:

I saw today, for the first time that you had been awarded the MacGregor medal: I fear the news is ancient history – but I would add my belated congratulations.

Your mother told my wife you had escaped the recall to India and were training cavalry men in Dublin: I hope you may all get out here soon, and that there may be work for cavalry – instead of this interminable trench warfare. I joined this lot early in November last – and we have been at it all the time – total losses to date 22 officers and 350 men, including wounded and sick. Reinforcements are the difficulty, and we have been drawing on Assam and Burma 7<sup>th</sup>. P. Battalions for the last two drafts. There don't seem to be enough troops for a real push through – and everybody looks toward K's new army, of which, I suppose, you are a part.

These, arrived recently, are also Nicolay and Dallas Smith, whom you probably remember on the Dibang. I like them both. They are workmen. Dundas' brother in the 6<sup>th</sup> Jats, got pipped through the deltoid in December – nobody thought it was

IMG 0328

going to be anything – but it has since incapacitated his arm through damaging a nerve: I saw a good deal of him at one time and he did very well – mentioned in dispatches etc. He is very like his brother to look at and to deal with.

We are out of the trenches for the moment – but go in again the day after tomorrow. Nowadays, the water is too deep in the original deep sunk trenches for anyone to occupy them – so we occupy built-up parapets above ground level: they are conspicuous, but dry – for which one is thankful. The men stand the cold and wet and exposure very well indeed – better than the plains folk – though the latter, too, are unexpectedly good at it. The French have sent their colonial troops to Africa for the winter – where they are apparently doing nothing. The French infantry isn't up to much – but their guns, field guns, are remarkable. I know nothing of their cavalry. One never sees it.

Write to this address and tell me all your news: also when you expect to get out – I hope we meet.

Yours sincerely.

Leonard Bethell

IMG 0329

Envelope addressed to.

Captain F.M.Bailey, I.A.

c/o Thos. Cook and son  
Ludgate Circus  
London, E.C.  
England

(please forward).

Forwarded to

The Shelbourne Hotel  
Dublin.

Various post marks 23rd FEB 15.

Stamped in red "Passed by no 1683 censor"

Oddly, no postage stamp.

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**Letter 2, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1915**

IMG 0330

Headed with a red 'War Office' seal, with UK government coat of arms

Room, 351,  
27-9-15,  
5.30 p.m.

My dear Bailey

I've made enquiries about your R.F.C. idea.

It will not be easy for you: the difficulty is as follows: –

- A) a necessary preliminary to any such appointment would be a written statement by the India Office – or, in your case, by the Foreign Office, that they will dispense with your services for the rest of the war.
- B) If you get this, then the rest should be comparatively easy – that would probably depend on an application on your behalf by the O.C. of some place like Hendon – the latter would be able to tell you if they have any age limit beyond which they will not take people.

The apparent red-tape of the clause a) above is more sensible than it seems. The India Office reserve the right of resuming disposal of the services of any

IMG 0331

Indian army officers returning sick or wounded from the front – and such officers, after being three months sick etc. revert automatically to the India office.

Therefore departments like Staff, Signals, Flying Corps, Munitions, et cetera refuse to take on I.A. officers unless they know they can have them for good. They are not going to waste time training them so long as they may be bagged any time by the India Office or the Foreign Office.

The reason why I think you will find difficulty in getting this certificate from India or Foreign Offices is that the Indian folk are seriously concerned at the growing shortage of experienced officers and are sending back to the East any and every officer they can possibly manage

Sorry old bird

Yours aye

Leonard, Bethell

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**Letter 3, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1930**

IMG 0332

New Clan  
Dorking  
New Year's Day

My dear Bailey

So many thanks from us both for your card at Xmas. The best of good wishes to you for the New Year: and may Nepal turn out to be all that you may hope of it.

I looked carefully through the New Year lists this morning but could find no trace of you. I know you care little for these things: but your friends do, on your behalf. Dawkes, however, appeared: and by his time in Kathmandu, new status has developed "according to plan" one will expect greater things for you than the courteous nod that he got when he laid it down.

I still have hopes that you will let me, some

IMG 0333

day, do that biography of the time we had together and the events adjoining: but I agree it would be rummie(?) now. You would, in any case, have a full draft copy of it to blue pencil before I sent it up to G.W.B. (Blackwood). But all that time is full of the

most promising stuff: and with the help of old diaries would make a long and interesting paper.

I'm getting concerned about the way the initials "F.R.G.S." are being commercialised. You've only to look through the advertisements of people running cruises, winter sports parties, hired safaris for C. African Shikhar, (and all the other ways in which people who are not competent to, spend good money on voluntary travel) to find how many of the promotions show F.R.G.S. after their names, as a bait. Ever since Curzon's megalomania of expansion with Kensington Gore, his council have had to go body(?) snatching for new members: and this commercialisation of the membership

IMG 0334

qualification is a direct result. Some years ago I put it up to the council that the list should be divided into "A.R.G.S." (associates) whose fees would come in, as they do now, often from people who have never seen the white side of Dover Cliffs, and who certainly have never been a mile from a cooked dinner in all their lives – and the "F.R.G.S." (fellows), whose qualifications would be scrutinised by the council in terms such as those which you and I know. The latter might be trusted (as doctors, indeed, are compelled) not to use the qualification for rewarding or commercial ends. The final result would be an enhancement of the "izzat" of the whole show: especially if the "A"s were told that they could be promoted to "F" for subsequent active work done: and, as for the change being a loss to the society, one would foreseeably expect a larger number of

IMG 0335

candidates.

I got a very courteous letter back, saying that the Council didn't see their way to risking the loss of fees in making the change. They were quite frank about the fact that fees, alone, were the obstacle. So I dropped it.

But if you – as you probably will be – are re-elected to the Council when you return, do you think you could keep this suggestion up your sleeve for a second chance of presenting it? What I'm so afraid of is that if the present state of affairs goes on, some almighty slump may suddenly take place, and fellows withdraw their names wholesale. Whereupon, it would be a case of Humpty Dumpty, the thing would be irreparable.

Do let me have a line sometimes about your new surroundings: and please accept my assurance, that nothing you tell me, directly or indirectly, will ever be printed or published.

Yours sincerely.

L. Bethell

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Letter 4, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1930

IMG 0336

New Clan

Dorking

10 . V . 30

My dear Bailey,

I have just been lunching with James Blackwood – who tells me that to the best of his knowledge you are not moving from Drummond Place, and will continue to live there. Is this so?

I ask for two reasons – firstly, because it would be a disappointment to your friends in the South if you were to fly once more to inaccessible regions – and secondly, because I still have the local Agents busy finding you the sort of house you described when you talked of the

IMG 0337

possibility of settling in Surrey. J.B. may have got hold of the muddy end of the stick; He may, on the other hand, have more recent news of you than mine – now a month or two old.

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You remember our jaunt, with Martin, down the Dibang, when we tore the bottom out of his Berthon boat? See “Maga” of June 1<sup>st</sup> – forthcoming. I'm afraid I've had to elaborate what was merely a lark into something longer – and add a few trimmings, surrounding circumstances which never happened, in order to make a rather longer story of it. The lies you will spot at once; but several of the other incidents you will recognise. I thought I'd better warn you of the fictitious nature of some of the details,

IMG 0338

and the reasons for them, since George Blackwood, who always likes to see behind the scenes in these contributions, if possible, knows that “Baird” = Bailey and “Marriott” = Martin.

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When are we to see you and Mrs Bailey down here? Can you make the time for a jaunt, and time to break bread?

===

Do you ever go to the R.G.S. evening meetings? I shall be at that of May 19th – as I am bidden to dine with the Kramer(?) Club that evening, and to go on afterwards to hear Schomberg read his paper on the Thian Shan. He ought to be interesting.

Best luck. Yours v. sincerely

L. A. Bethell

*(not clear if this letter continues after the signature, or a sheet has been lost)*

IMG 0339

If you'd not mind a moderate height above sea level, Bhim Tal and around Naukuchia Tal are quiet; and the lakes hold some rather reluctant and unenterprising mahseer. Live in the dak bungalow, as former.

On the whole, if I had your choice, I'd plump for the places in the following order: -

- Kulu – out and out the best. You'd love it.
- Bhoura: v. good, if you can get in.
- The Gali's: ditto (not quite so good)

The rest tail on, as indicated.

NB: I should avoid being made bear leader, if I were you. It would spoil the whole show, and the retinue would bully your servants no end. However you know all about that.

IMG 0340

Yes, I'm "Mauser" in the Sphere and Graphic, (also "Punjabi", "Peter Paul", "Forepoint Severn" etc. etc. in other publications – and my own initials in R.G.S. book reviews). But keep it dark: I spend a lot of time covering up my tracks – a thing which gives liberty of action when writing on contentious political subjects and prevents interference by Mil. Dept. India Office, who are meddlesome.

Just now, I'm onto a far more interesting job. George Blackwood is bringing out a 12 volume anthology of all things of "Tales from the Outposts" nature. Each vol. 75 to 100,000 words: different subjects, frontier, exploration, administration, shikar, sea, small wars, Great War, etc. It will involve

IMG 0341

digging through all the bound volumes of Maga for the last 40 years, and getting the best in each subject out by various authors: a colossal job taking about 8 hours a day, seven days a week, for five to six months. He's made me general editor of the whole series: and, if it's successful, probably another dozen to follow: Lord knows, there's material enough. So, for the moment, I've shut down all other work: only done 11 volumes, so far (half yearly ones) and there are 69 more to go! Each vol. twice as thick as the Army List.

But don't mutter a word: I'm not at all sure he wants it talked about in advance of publication. But if you hear I've suddenly gone off my nut, and am eating hay under a tree, you will know what has caused it.

IMG 0342

I told G.B. I was trying to induce you to write some more, and he was – and still is – looking forward to it; I wish you would: he'd like anything you sent, like a short. But

now I suppose you'll say it's Napoo! Can't you manage something? With your store of memories, it should be as easy as makes no matter. Do try.

Sorry for writing at such length – and about myself. Bad plan. But I always seem to run on, when I scribble to you. Not to others.

Best of luck in the New Year.

Yours ever

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 5, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1931**

IMG 0343

New Clan

Dorking

10 . III . 31

My dear Bailey,

Thanks for yours of 14th February. I am glad you are taking advice for Kulu. It is an enchantment – especially in peace and quiet and the deodars – but the people are ‘orrid: men without courage or honesty – and women without shame – both sexes honey combed with venereal, so I should watch the plates and cups at dak bungalows and have ‘em wiped down before you use them. If, as I hope, you get as far up the valley as MANAULI, climb up with the BASHIST Nullah, just above, where bears are confiding and frequent – black and red. I don't know if I said this in my last letter – wish I were coming with you. I've been shivering for four months, and for a week we've been deep in snow.

IMG 0344

They seem to be doing you well in shikar, where you are – tigers and things. I remember your crowd well, at the Turban-ation in 1903: very mediaeval – and a procession of retainers, stuck about all over with mistri-made cutlery, mounted on pink-nosed squealing stallions: taught, if I remember rightly, to walk wild in arena on their hind legs, and beating time with their forelegs in the air – the rider most insecurely perched. They got more cheers than all the upholstered elephants.

Yes – I expect there will be some headaches when the Princes try to make head or tail of the present negotiations. It is only in the last few weeks that we have had any “lux in tenebris” over here: and now that Churchill has taken a strong lead, and had some brainy men behind him, he has induced that

IMG 0345



backboneless wobbler Baldwin to give him his official approval. But B. is at the mercy of the latest wind that blows, and will never be a leader. There doesn't seem to be a man left in this distracted land of ours. Anybody who took his courage in his hands, spoke up, and shamed the devil, could be leader of our Party. The whole nation, if only we would realise it, is sick of parliament – Socialist, Rad. or Tory – and is simply aching for a Dictator. I think we shall have to borrow Mussolini before long.

Yes – this anthology is the hardest work I've struck: over two or three quarter million words slogged through, analysed, and recorded – and only 134 articles selected. About one in five is the average I estimate for

#### IMG 0346

inclusion – your “Day in Tibet” is earmarked for the “Frontiers” volume: your “Takin” for the “Shikar” volume and your “Beetle Game” will join the one volume which contains the smiles, a volume called “In Lighter Vein”. I've only worked up to mid-1915 so far, and three months work behind me: it will be the end of May before all is finished – and then comes the proof correcting of 12 × 100,000 words – and a Preface to be written to each of the dozen volumes. On top of that comes the correspondence with 70 or 80 separate authors on rights of reproduction. Purely for your own information (and don't let it get about before the time is ripe, or it might set the more grasping one's thinking, and planning bigger prices) we are going to offer each author £5 for right of reproduction – in each article

#### IMG 0347

reproduced. They ought to agree as it will be a bit of unexpected jam on the bread and butter they've already drawn at the time of first publication: and, anyhow, if a fellow is notified that his stuff has been “selected” for the Anthology, he ought to feel pleased enough to make him accept the fiver with a smile. Anyhow, there will be no fudge about the “selecting” part, anybody who gets in will find himself in damned good company: as I say, about four out of five get turned down. Of course, I am not the last word: the brothers Blackwood will have the final Yea or Nay after I've put up the summary of each volume, and they've read each through. But I expect they'll have only minor corrections to make.

#### IMG 0348

Very little other news – my boy has broken down, and we've had to take him away from Stowe after three years – leaving and breaking arrangements all to blazes: I've got him down for Trinity, Cambridge, but it rather looks as if he wouldn't be fit for much more.

Have you seen O'Connor's new book – “On the Frontier and Beyond” – you remember him with Younghusband, of course. The R.G.S. have asked me to review it when their copy turns up. Visser read an excellent paper on the Karakorum the other day: he's quite a workman, with a hard-working wife. The two of them sail up crags like goats – and they seem to prefer glaciers to dry land. Something new to me is Hollanders – who live in endless flats at home.

Best of luck, Bailey

Very sincerely

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 6, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1931**

IMG 0349

*(Note at the top)*

Forgive this address – I've lost the one in India which you gave me.

New Clan

Dorking

9 . IV . 31

My dear Bailey,

Please see this month's R.G.S. journal, page 373 – line 11 from top. I had no idea before reading this that there is now a motor road direct into Kulu. It seems rather as if it works in from the due South – or Simla direction, but it may be a continuation of the Pathankot – Palampur road up the Kangra valley. In either case it should make Kulu accessible to you if that is your obstacle: though, undoubtedly, it has great disadvantage of intruding travel. I always looked on Kulu as one of the few surviving

IMG 0350

oases in a world flooded with petrol – but it now seems to have gone the way of the Sahara and Chinese Turkestan.

However, if you get to MANAULI near the head of the valley, you will find peace and the odour of deodars. If you do, mind you take a rifle – not less heavy than 0.350. The bears, both red and brown, in the BASHIST Nullah, a morning's climb from M. dak bungalow, eat out of your hand. But you will need a tent, as you "sit" for their feeding grounds in the forest at earliest dawn, or before: and at late dusk.

No more now. The Anthology approaches completion.

Best luck.

Yours ever

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 7, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1934**

IMG 0351

New Clan

Dorking

5 . III . 34

My dear Bailey,

Allow me to repeat my regrets of this morning, both to you and to Mrs. Bailey, that the contretemps should have upset a meeting to which both my wife and myself looked forward. It is, I hope, only deferred. Would you send me a schedule of your foreseeable dates in and out of Town, to allow of my proposing another date as soon as these doctors set me free?

There is much to be talked of.

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About your book, and the stenographer.

If I may venture a word of advice – it is that you should write what you intend, in any form

IMG 0352

intelligible to yourself, and on any system. And not until you have got it all shaped up to your own satisfaction, get in a stenographer. Then dictate it to her: and afterwards let me transcribe it from her shorthand into typing. This will save you having to sit over her all the time she's typing, to keep her right about how you'd like punctuation, paragraphing, spelling of unusual names of places and persons, et cetera put into the typescript. In other words, you can explain or emphasise all these points as you dictate. The term was "line clear".

This is mechanism. I've found it a good plan not to use loose sheets of paper when writing, but a bunch of ordinary lined and margined 2.' or 3.' copy books got by the dozen from Woolworths. Use only the right-

IMG 0354

hand side of the copybook, keeping the left for notes, corrections, Interpolations or jotting down the odds and ends of ideas that will keep cropping up while you're writing something quite different: and which, if allowed to slide, vanish from memory. The copybooks being cheap, you can afford to apparently waste space, even when for page after page the left-hand side has nothing written on it.

Then, on whatever plan you intend to work – chronological, geographical or what not – organise your ideas into distinct heads: each approaching a chapter or group of chapters, but keep a separate copybook for each, even if you don't completely fill it.

With regard to the opening chapter – which is always the best if it contains what these editors

IMG 0353

call “arrest” – or an immediate appeal to the attention of the reader – don't attempt to do this at the outset: it's the most difficult part of the whole job. Instead dive straight into what you have to write – the part that interests you (as it will then inevitably interest the reader) – without preamble. Long afterwards, with all that you have written floating organised in your mind, and a complete picture thereby obtained, go back to the beginning and do your opening chapter: which, again, may well include a summary of what is to come after – a thing impossible until you've actually written the remainder of the book.

Don't be deterred – or let your style be cramped – by any subconscious self-limitation as to length. Nowadays the old 100,000 limit to which the

#### IMG 0355

book trade always tried to work as an all-round economical figure, no longer holds. Books of five times that length are common, and editors are beginning to see the wisdom of offering the buying public a good fat wad of stuff for their money. So, if an idea or a situation appeals to you, and you find yourself writing on and on about it, let it rip! Go on at it, irrespective of length. Remember the golden psychological rule that the reader's interest in a subject is his exact reflex of the writer's: that and no more: certainly no less. Enthusiasms are, in fact “catching”.

But the moment you find you've written yourself dry at any point, shut up quickly, tuck in the ends, and put a full stop as big as a cricket bat.

In other words, don't be afraid of writing. Remember

#### IMG 0356

that you've stuff in you, experiences, contacts, enthusiasms and – to use a hard-worked term – adventures, such as any other writer would envy: and you've not the least call to be in anyway diffident or apologetic about it.

In regard to maps. The stereotyped way, of putting a folding map in at the end, is usual, but maddening. It and the book cannot be held open at the same time, unless the reader sits up to a table and spreads it. A very usual plan is to substitute diagrams inside the front and back covers. These are far more accessible, since they are easily found and glanced at while reading. But in your case, I would recommend skeleton diagrams as above, reinforced by a whole bird's eye view folding map just in front of the index, for the

#### IMG 0357

more earnest, or informed reader to consult about the details which your diagrams from their very nature would fail to supply.

Illustrations. They add enormously to the costs of production. Having regard to one's own submissions and memories, the tendency always is to put in too many of them, with the result that the price of the book rapidly mounts from half a guinea to 15 shillings and hence by an almost immediate step to a guinea: with consequent shortening of sales. One per 20 pages of print is a usual maximum ration. This is a great pity. Your stock of unusual photographs must be quite unique.

Don't forget a good index. Consider the book reviews in the R.G.S. Journal. Every one of them finishes with comment on maps and index,

IMG 0358

their presence or absence and their quality. Indexing is sheer coolie-work: but it's worth it. Some agencies advertise themselves as "doing indexing" – knowing what a toil it is to the author: their work may save you a job, but it's quite valueless when finished: have nothing to do with them.

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I'm afraid it's dreadful cheek of me to have offered my suggestions. You probably know quite as much about it as I do – if not more. But if you don't, the above may shorten work for you by eliminating some of the more important snags.

With regard to the finished result, you can promise yourself a large and interested audience – not least enthusiastic being the one who is writing to you.

Yours sincerely

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 8, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1931**

IMG 0360

New Clan

Dorking

19 . V . 31

Dear Balley,

Many thanks for yours of April 27<sup>th</sup>. I am sorry Kulu won't see you. You are likely to get little holiday if you go to Mashobra and are within shout of the F.O. In any case you will find it difficult to avoid week-enders coming out for a breath of air, and bringing all the latest guff with them. I wish I could have a talk with you: not so much on facts and events (we get them, fairly accurately, by cable) as on tendencies and policies. Irwin has had a proper whitewashing since his return: and all comments about his "sanity" on a note of uplift – and general

IMG 0361

soulfulness. Very much as they tried to idolise that insanitary little bunniah, Gandhi. They forget – I sometimes think the whole of this damned emasculated milk and water post war world forgets – that in dealing with Bolsheviks, Chicago gangsters, bunniah activism plotters, and all the rest of the moral underworld, you have to set a thief to catch a thief; and not be too squeamish. "Uplift" died with the Victorians. That's why I hold that a quick and easy solution of the present Indian troubles would be quickly found if we had Winston Churchill at the India Office, and Lloyd (late of

Egypt) as Viceroy. Both of them stark realists, and with as much conscience between them as would butter ha'penny bun. The East would understand it!

IMG 0362

No: you're not right about the reproduction fees in the Anthology. When George Blackwood pays for an article, he buys the "first British serial rights" only: all rights of subsequent reproduction remain vested in the author. This he explained to me, myself, when some of my stuff was poached – bodily – by an Austrian magazine, out of "Maga". They sent G.B. a cheque for having done so – which he passed on to me. I refused it: said that the article was sold to him, and the cheque therefore his; whereupon he explained the rules governing the matter, and said he had only "first right" in the stuff. So all authors reproduced in the Anthology will have a fee offered to them for permission to do so.

IMG 0363

I was up in Town yesterday – and saw a placard of the evening papers starring "Mysterious death of a D.S.O. Colonel". I bought a copy: sheet enclosed. Poor Morshead. I thought at once of you, and the Tsangpo struggles of the two of you. I expect his pony ran out above the built-up "jumps" in the "rides" close to Maymyo – in the pine forest where paper-chases are held; and the pointed bamboos of the side-wings got him in the tummy. It's merely a guess; simply because I just missed an exactly similar accident myself in the same place in 1919.

Write when you have time. I'm up to my eyes in work, and starved for good hefty exercise; but never so busy as not to be able to answer your letters.

Very sincerely

L.A. Bethell

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**Letter 9, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1934**

IMG 0364

Tel: Dorking 360

New Clan  
Dorking  
Surrey  
Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> 1934

My dear Bailey,

Many thanks for your letter and for the good news of your coming to this area for a fortnight from the 18th. There is much that I want to talk about, and if you and Mrs. Bailey can come and break bread (etc.) with us, I look forward to several meetings.

Strangely, your letter came by the same post as the November R.G.S. journal – where I saw your comments on Kingdon Ward and his show around Shinden Gompa. This, again, just after I had finished reading Kaulback's book on his part of K.W.'s journey which included your hot springs in the Dipluck La and the takin. Kaulback was very readable – a plain unvarnished account by a man who, K.W. says, will be one of the great travellers of the near future. They seem to think a lot of each other, those two. But Kaulback, from his book, struck me as having been unnecessarily “un-bundobust” about his show. I don't think you or I would, from sheer carelessness, have been caught short of both boots and bare food, though you were compelled to live on the forced diet(?) you had 4 weeks down the Lohit in 1911. I think it was Nordenskjold who said that “adventures” were a sign of bad bundobust, and that hardships need not happen. However, he was always on the side of the angels.

Well, of course, K.W. has the great pull over men who are compelled by time, finance, or political considerations to take a direct line and carry straight through, in that his arrangements – and his finances that cover them – provide for an early start, where he can see his flowers and shrubs in their first spring or early summer bloom: then he has a considerable gap, and then does turn

#### IMG 0365

round once more to collect seed pods. It seems that in the “middle gap” he has time to put in, and some time to do these treks round, thoroughly covering all the area in which he is working – hence his scramble down the Tsangpo Gorge and his rambles round the Shinden Gompa – Sangachu Dyong valley and glaciers. And provided a man has the necessary instruments and knowledge, and has used quiet times here at home in working up every scrap of knowledge accumulated by previous travellers, there is no reason why he shouldn't have a very useful skeleton of his chosen area worked out already on squared paper before he gets there. By none of which do I desire in the slightest to minimise what he does and has done. I think you and I would have considered him an acquisition at any time on the N.E. frontier, but what I do think is that the peculiar conditions of his very specialised job give him opportunities denied to anyone but a professional botanist.

I was particularly interested in what he worked out about the North East head waters of the Dibang. That tangle of country always puzzled me, and now he seems to have got it into some kind of understandable sequence. His description of the almost dwarfish, perfectly flat-faced and monkey like Behijiyas fits exactly a small parcel of otherwise unclassifiable strangers whom we ran into on the Dibang just before we had to turn back in 1911. You, of course, went much further up than that later, but you may remember the lot I mean. I've a snapshot of them somewhere, which I'll show you when you're here. K.W. says they're the same as the DARUS of Upper Burma. I suppose all those Mishmis you and I knew that year were Chulikattis, and I still believe there's more difference between the two tribes than will allow of their being classified as nothing but branches of the same clan.

#### IMG 0366

I don't suppose his theory of the Divides, the Salween and the Himalayan extension, will ever be solved in our lifetime – and when it is, it will be by aeroplane, and vertical photographs. After all, it's nearly 50 years since A.K. put on paper any reliable facts about the ranges, and the very fringes of the detailed survey have hardly yet been touched. K.W. estimates the triangle Sadiya, Fort Shers, Shinden Gompa, to cover 25,000 square miles flat, and many more when those miles are upended. And if you were to put in a fourth point, say Lhasa, or even TSARI, to these three – as would inevitably be necessary if one had to blanket the whole area under discussion, think of what a colossal job that once would be for survey. Personally, I don't think it will ever be done. Much of the geography of Inner Asia depended for its interest, and for the enterprise of explorers like yourself, on the fact that we held India: and when, well within our lifetimes, India ceases to be of any interest to any of us (as, indeed, Ireland has for the past 12 years ceased to be of interest to Englishman – and for the same reasons) I think you will find that all geographical, geological, and geophysical problems hanging on the countries adjoining it will drop out of the picture. In which case, you and Kingdon Ward and men like you may well find yourselves the last of the great explorers of great problems, and “the glory will have departed”. It's rather hell to think of it. If only our politicians knew what, in the name of an unworthy and unmanly sentimentality, they are destroying, when they ask us to abdicate.

I have another reason for being glad that you will be within reach, here, before long, and in England till December 27th. For months past I've had under my hand the roughed-out words of that series of incidents covering my association with “BARCLAY” for Maga, and though I shall have to embroider and work up bare

#### IMG 0367

facts with a picturesque story, I must get you to look it over first and tell me that however great an ornamental liar you may think me, you haven't any actual objection to this thing going in. Naturally I'll say nothing offensive, and, remembering what you told me of the long arm of the Soviets who pursue till today anyone they can recognise as having been with you that time in Tashkent etc, I shall gloss over that period with nothing but sketch matter and let you come to life, in detail, from Quetta 1920 onwards. But of course you must read the whole – for one thing, G.W.B. would want to be sure that you wouldn't consider yourself libelled, before he printed it. And as there wouldn't be a smell of a chance of you giving it even 5 minutes after you got back to India and the turmoil of your new job, I must make some shift to get it done before you leave.

It is only the other day that I was able to unload onto the Oxford University Press (Humphrey Mitford's) the infernal grind which has kept me from my original writing these fifteen months past, and now, naturally, I find that the wheels of composition grind slowly, and the stuff they turn out is exceeding small.! But, with renewed life injected into the mechanism by all this intensive reading about the places you and I were so fond of, there seems a chance that things will go more quickly, and that possibly the result may be even worth finishing.

I've kept to the end my hearty congratulations on what is really your main piece of news. Nepal. I'm very, very glad, Bailey, and I wish you every luck in what bids fair to



be an outstandingly interesting job – apart on the kudos of its status. Your namesake and cousin, when he and I were commanding the two halves of the 4th, had a long spell there; he, as you remember, has a way with him when it comes to the wine list, in red or yellow or even plain white

IMG 0368

and he brought back (and, somewhat inventively, retailed to me) some extraordinary confidences which he had gathered from his Jhemadar's brothers, nephews, etc when slightly elated. I must tell you them, some time, when you're down here.

Naturally, I will not mention your news to anybody, but I expect it will be official before very long. However, till you say the word, I'm dumb.

Queer that you should have come across that letter I wrote to Mrs. Bailey from the Abor country. I remember the fact well on which you reminded me, and the drippy smoky shack in which I sat when I wrote it. Don't destroy it. Some day, someone will want to write your biography, and then all such letters throwing side-lights on your leading achievements will be of value.

Forgive the untidy scrawl – written on my knee sitting up to a fire in my frozen den at the top of the house, too cold to sit up to the writing table only six feet away.

My best messages to you both

Yours very sincerely

L.A. Bethell

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**Letter 10, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1935**

IMG 0369

62, Hillfield Court,  
Belsize Avenue,  
N. W. 3  
27 . XII . 35

My dear Bailey,

Many thanks for the card: a very striking epitome of the underlying Buddhism of the Gurkha Hindu worship beliefs. It could hardly have been better epitomised, than the outsize dorje in front of a Hindu temple. And a fine camera you have: I've rarely seen better definition.

When I saw your envelope, I thought it was going to contain your comments on "Barclay" of "Adedoids" (December Maga) and possibly something crisp about my having exceeded what you once suggested as permissible about your Tashkent times. I wrote to you about this, a month or more ago, but our letters probably crossed: and I look forward to your answer. I am still rather nervous about

IMG 0370

whether you think what I wrote indiscreet. But I was careful not to do so until the expiry of the year – for which you stipulated – from your time of taking up the Kathmandu Legation.

Material of the right kind for Maga is not as easy to come by as formerly, and we sometimes get anxious at Paternoster Row. The old imperial mindset of pre-war days seems to have given place to a sleepy and gutless acquiescence in what the backboneless peace-and-vote-hunting politicians can and do lay down as national policy: with an inevitable effect on the old sturdy stuff which used to come in so fast that George Blackwood had to keep it off with a stick. Nowadays he can shout for it, and not get it. However, we manage to keep up the old standard of values somehow.

Write when you can. It's long since I heard from you – a letter I mean: and I'd almost made up my mind to postpone sending this till after January 1st – in the sure

IMG 0371

hope that I would have been then able to prefix one more letter of the alphabet to your C.I.E. However – if and when that happens – it will be a further excuse for bothering you with a letter.

There's little time – or mental energy – for further Maga articles, but I have some notes on our Dibang and Slssori journeys which, padded out with a certain amount of trimming, might work up into another jungle paper. Though some time hence. I suppose there's no chance of getting a Maga paper out of you? I wish you'd try to find time.

My wife and I have put Dorking up for sale, bodily, and have moved into a Town flat, here. Near her friends (Hampstead) and only half an hour from Paternoster Row. So address here in future, when you write. The change over from ten years of the best country life to Town surroundings has been more

IMG 0372

than a bit of a jolt. But worth it, even if it contradicts everything that I advised, in that book of what to do in retirement. It's nearly through its sixth 1,000 – so in a mild way, ranks as a “best seller” by purely booksellers' arithmetic.

Best wishes to you both from us both. It's too late to catch you with New Year greetings, I fear.

Yours very sincerely

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 11, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1936**

IMG 0373

TELEGRAMS, MAGA, LONDON

TELEPHONE 10663 CENTRAL

My dear Bailey,

Many thanks for yours of December 29th from Government House, Calcutta. It was a relief to know that I had not made life complicated for you (officially, socially etc) by "Barclays" doings in "Adedoids". Lacking an exact perception of your contacts, I might have landed you into something awkward: a poor return for all the varied ideas with which you, often unconsciously, have provided me, in the past – and which I have turned into print.

===

There was a good group of you and your Nepal royalties in a recent number of the Illustrated London News: you've probably had a copy sent you.

===

I read out extracts of your letter to Jim B. especially the part about the paper "forward" and its suggestion of H.E.'s recipe for longevity! He loves a good story – especially one with a mischievous bit of fun

IMG 0374

in it – like this. He has the most infectious laugh of anyone I know – and is in many other ways a most delightful man to work for – and with.

===

Yes, so far as I know, my job here is permanent. The man whose death caused the vacancy, died of old age, and I propose to do the same. There is however one great drawback: the practically complete hanging up of one's own writing – no time for it, and, at the end of the normally by no means easy day, no energy. However, I wouldn't be without the job for worlds; the absolute plum of all things literary and really worthwhile.

===

Thanks so much for the cuttings. The Oxford University Press have now taken over the book: I have no time for running it, and you may find it in their catalogues sandwiched between a new printing of the Book of Common Prayer and a volume of Dean

IMG 0375

Inge's commentaries on Plato. Hardly the place to look for a manual on post retirement finance: however, I can't complain: they offered me 15% of takings to begin with – but I stuck out for 50: and after a fortnight's cogitation they most unexpectedly surrendered. Their big noise, Humphrey Mitford, was knighted in the New Year's honours – where, by the way, I looked long and closely for your name, and, to my surprise as much as my disappointment, failed to find it.

===

I have just been to the Foreign Office, to make a formal protest against Mussolini's excluding Maga from Italy – part of his new anti-British campaign of pinpricks – and have pointed out that we are quite non-political. They are going to make a 'preferential' case of it (a good commentary of the standing of Maga in high places) and the despatch on the subject goes off by this evening's diplomatic bag. There's a joy in feeling that we can get consideration for which the 'Times' pleads in vain!

IMG 0376

I still keep up with the "Sphere", so if there is anything striking about your winter shoots (rhino, if you can manage it: tigers, these people, quite wrongly, view as "visual jeu") which you can photograph, do send the prints along, and I will put them to Percy Horne, the Editor. By the way, if by any chance you're getting a new camera, do try the LEICA. I had a good look at one the other day, and was particularly struck by the fool proof distance focusing, worked on the principle of a kind of automatic Barr & Stroud miniature range finder built into the body of the camera's structure.

===

Malcolm Burr, Nagaroff's translator and close friend, has just been in for a talk. N. now has a job as consulting mining engineer somewhere round Jo'burg. I doubt if we shall ever see him back in England again.

===

Best luck Bailey. Write whenever you can.

I've framed your "dorje" Xmas card – the most unusual picture I've had for many a long day.

Yours very sincerely

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 12, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1938**

IMG 0377

TELEGRAMS, MAGA, LONDON

TELEPHONE 10663 CENTRAL

37, Paternoster Row, E.C.

20 . 1 . 38

My dear Bailey,

Very glad to get your letter of 11th from Calcutta, though sorry to hear that Mrs Bailey is ill. The white people were never meant to live in the really damp hotspots of the East. They have their own bugs – a peculiarly virulent form, against which we have little defence.

Please offer my sympathies.

About Newnes' proposal and offer –

You will do yourself no good in the literary world by association with that show. They are catchpenny “popular” caterers who's unequal and temporary interest in the grubbier side of French politics or a fire in a City warehouse (to give example of current trivialities) and you might easily find your matter,

#### IMG 0378

when written, presented to the public sandwiched between undesirable context. This offer for your undoubtedly specialised matter – at 3 guineas a thousand – the market price of which, in right hands and in proper surroundings, would be ten – is sufficient indication of the style of use they would propose to make of it.

Secondly, your having published with Newnes would make the better class publications look askance at your fuller presentation, when in book form. No reputable publisher would like to think himself second fiddle after the Newnes lot: and you would have to avow that you had already published part of your book – even if in different phraseology – with N's. We, here, for instance condemn a thing 'ek dum', whatever its merits, if it or any part of it has been published anywhere before.

#### IMG 0379

Thirdly – Newnes' request that “the whole should be full of action and interest, with no padding” shows the way in which they would propose to list it. Pure catch penny journalese. For want of a better word, Yawk.

What the public fail to realise is that there is a very hard and definite line, in publishing, drawn between “journalism” and “letters”. Geographically the two classes are divided by the big railway bridge that crosses the bottom of Ludgate Hill. Westward of it, you will find Fleet Street, and all its works and tricks. Eastward, Blackwood's, the Oxford University Press, and those like us. People may think of it as snobbery, of course, but the division, both psychic and actual, is very real: and our side of the line would no more establish, or allow, contacts with the other side, than you would of your free will go to a sergeants' dance.

#### IMG 0380

I'm glad you asked me. To have accepted Newnes would have been a “gaffe”, a thing which would have given you a black mark which would have stuck to you, like a mole, for the rest of your literary life.

All of this leads inevitably to a corollary – that we, Maga, are your market and what Haldane would have called his “spiritual home”. Get your material finished, polish it up, and send it to George Blackwood at Edinburgh. He knows the value of what you have done, a thing which will have a considerable value when he comes to consider what you've written.

For the rest, I look forward, quite sincerely, to seeing you over here in the summer. I'm glad you've made up your mind to chuck, and come home – and share

your regrets that you did not do so 10 years earlier. To me, the 12 years since I retired have been the best and fullest in my life, and grow ever better.

My best messages to Mrs Bailey.

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 13, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1938**

IMG 0381

37, Paternoster Row, E.C. 4

8 . III . 38

My dear Bailey,

Many thanks for yours of 15th of February from "somewhere in the Terai". Good hunting!

Yes, I gathered from a paragraph in the "Times" some weeks ago that you are retiring in April, and Belham taking your place. I gather from an old Army List that he's a man considerably younger than ourselves: ex-15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, and a bit of a linguist in the Punjabi and N.W.F. bats, though he doesn't seem to have touched anything Mongolian. Wonder how he'll get on as your successor?

Need I tell you of the welcome awaiting you here, when eventually you pitch up in July? I thoroughly agree with you, that it would have been wise if you had retired earlier: not that I've the impertinence to suggest for a moment that your work in India, for the last 10 years has

IMG 0382

been valueless, either to yourself or to the Empire. But I have a rooted conviction, after a dozen years' experience of it, that a man's best, most fruitful, and certainly most satisfying life only begins after he has retired, and when, fortified by a moderate pension, he is then free at last to map out his life for himself. But he must do it on a plan. Nothing more easy than to slide into a shapeless existence, in which a host of trivialities tend to take charge. Whereupon the thing becomes undisciplined. The man loses his mental (and too often his physical) shape, and the whole thing goes gaga. I've been reading Arnold Wilson lately – a sound man, who has spent a lot of time and energy in getting into close and personal touch with the English underdog, whom you and I only know of by hearsay. With every appearance of obvious truth, A. W. has narrowed the misery of the unemployed down to one basic factor: not hunger, not dingy quarters and nagging wife, not physical depression, but, "the overwhelming misery of

IMG 0383

one long compulsory holiday". Physical troubles are bearable, but muddle-cum-boredom, when indefinitely prolonged, are insupportable.

Nine-tenths of what I've advocated, and good half of what I have written, for years past, has been directed at imploring the retired man to construct a disciplined and strenuous life for himself, dating from six months after his retirement date, and thereby avoid the soul killing result of being indefinitely and continuously "on leave". The first six months, of course, he must have. He's earned it. Anyhow, he'll want it, in which to look about him and make his plans. But, thereafter, his future happiness will depend in sole and direct measure on the amount of system he can instil into his life, and his energy – constructive energy – he can put into his new master: his job.

I fully and frankly apologise for this apparently unpardonable intrusion into your personal affairs. But, apart from the fact that it is what I myself have found

#### IMG 0384

to be true, it brings us to the short point at issue between us. Your writing.

I'm immensely relieved to hear that you are going to do as I suggested, and give up the idea of a volume of autobiographical reminiscences. You've material by the cartload: and the best and soundest use you can make of it is to turn it into "long-short" stories on the Maga plan. There's a certain trick about it, and a good deal of hard work. But, once learnt, you can chuck your cap over the windmill and dive in. You know that Maga's doors are already more than half open to you; A state of affairs rarely reached by the hoi polloi, who try to get in with a tin opener, and a corkscrew, finally with a crowbar: and then fail. As I know well – I, whose job it is to keep out all but the best, anyhow at the London end. And as for the way of getting the material into publishable form, if you want my help, you know well that you have me at your command.

Quite apart from the satisfaction which anybody,

#### IMG 0385

I don't care how highly placed, gets from seeing himself in Maga, the thing is really profitable. The key of the situation being that if the paper is good, G.W.B. never limits you (within reason) to length. And at 30/- a page of 480 words, the payment tends to pile up. I've had as much as £57 from him for one paper before now. Admittedly, that was the longest. But £30 to £35 I think is about my average, over the 26 things I've had in. Forgive these personal details: advice is valueless unless illustrated by demonstrable fact.

People like ourselves – you, pre-eminently – have a mine of wealth in our past experiences. Yours are ten times greater, and of more value, than mine. Nine tenths of the writers, here at home, have never been a mile from a cooked dinner in all their lives; their nearest approach to the wild places of this earth, the smell of a Chinese restaurant in Soho. And those writers sit about in soggy lumps, searching and winnowing the stale and profitless life around them for something, anything, out of which to dodge up a story. Poor devils. About one in ten thousand

#### IMG 0386

make money by it: Arnold Bennett, Priestley, Galsworthy, for instance: but the remainder sink into the joyless slums of literature – just for lack of those experiences, those memories, which you and I have by the double handful.

*Side note*

(1 in 10,000. These are among 60,000 new books published in England annually.)

Memories, pre-eminently. There must be a mind to grasp and retain details: as e.g. what you now tell me of a certain impatience, on both sides, existing between you and that soft-skinned pussyfooted collection of pseudo-autocrats, the Secretariat. I've known it for long, from little things you've dropped, any time this last thirty years. Do you remember once remarking, quite in parenthesis, during one of our "ollopings" in Sisseri, on one of those pink and plastered popinjays in the Secretariat, who had got off some unoriginal quip or other, was pleased with it, sat back, rubbed his soft hands together, and congratulated himself on having written a "masterly minute"? Well, see 25 years later, Maga, January this year, page 40. These things stick. See also page 19, bottom of pink column, where is reproduced

IMG 0387

your dictum that if the soldier takes an interfering hand in politics, he gets it in his neck. That, I think, you said at Nizamghat, in the period of the unspeakable Bally: though apropos what, I can't quite remember.

Anyhow, not to labour the point, it is that these things stick: memories are invaluable: and you and I – you, particularly – possess stored up material under our hats, ready for a lifetime's writing, let alone our remaining years. But I won't for a moment suggest that it's easy. No worthwhile thing in this life ever was easy: for if it were easy, it wouldn't be worthwhile.

I'm fully aware that I'm risking a rap on the knuckles for saying all I've said: and it's quite inadequate for me to apologise, in advance, for having done so. But I've long had a mental vision, in your case, of what you've now put into words: when you speak of the immense mass of material at your command, and say "Perhaps I will be so overwhelmed that I will do – nothing".

IMG 0388

Exactly. L'embarras du choix – which quills over here incorrectly quote as embarras de richesse. And here, I think, is one of the ways in which I can help you.

If I go on talking, this screed will finish by being too bulky for airmail. Will you drop me a line, giving me a sure address to which I can write in the next few months? This will presumably be my last chance of catching you in Nepal. And, if you can add a postscript giving me at any rate provisional absolution for anything apparently meddlesome I've said in this letter, my thanks will be twofold.

Yours very sincerely

L. A. Bethell



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**Letter 14, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1938**

IMG 0389

TELEGRAMS, MAGA, LONDON

TELEPHONE 10663 CENTRAL

37, Paternoster Row, E.C.4

19 . IV . 38

My dear Bailey,

Very many thanks for yours of the 9th. How things have brushed up since we first knew them! Ten days from Kathmandu to Paternoster Row!

I am more than interested in all you tell me, especially about your movements. Lacking, however, a fixed address at which to find you in the next few weeks, I send this c/o the Travellers', in the hope that you have given them directions re forwarding.

Best news of all is that you are likely to be here at the end of May. I've much to talk over with you. Principally, I want you to read, and if possible give your approval to the typescript of a full-length book, in which you (under a different name) are the leading figure. It is about the N.E.F. jungle hopping: the whole thing purely imaginary,

IMG 0390

but in parts, friends of yours might recognise you from certain events described. I sincerely hope you will be able to say "Right. Push along with it", for one thing, Blackwoods' are expecting it and have kept tally, throughout, with its progress, for publication in the "Autumn List" of our things, if and when "O.K.'d" by you. For another: my wife has had a serious breakdown and has had to go away to a nursing home in the country for a treatment which may be indefinitely prolonged. This, while halving my assets (forgive these details!) has also thrown on my hands my boy, still suffering from T.B. The net result is that this book has to be a success: and if you say "No" to it, the work of many months past will fall to bits. So it's rather a case of an appeal to your kindness in casting a favourable and permissive eye on it: always when you have time: which, of course, will not be so long as you are on the move. This letter, therefore, is only a curtain raiser to the time when you say "Send it along, and I'll look over it". If of course,

IMG 0391

it's only a matter of cutting out a bit here or there, that wouldn't spoil it. But if you veto the whole, no amount of patching would make it a success. However – far be it from me to commit you to anything until you've seen it.

Yes: I'm afraid Arnold Wilson has fallen out of the ranks of the "do-ers" and into the ranks of the talkers. "All hope abandon, ye who enter here" is a thing that might be written in brass over Westminster, the home of false values. What a pity. The

same thing has always happened to even the most famous soldiers or sailors who have gone into Parliament, from Wellington onwards.

Very glad to see that Mrs Bailey has found her magician: and in Vienna. They have some first-class brains there, but what a pity that so many of the best are Jews, and will now have short shrift. A good number of them have flocked into this country in the past

IMG 0392

few weeks. Though I dislike Jews, I really think this country will be the gainer.

Thank you, also, for the "Statesman" cutting. Very amusing to find that one's pet lies now gain currency as traditional fact! There wasn't a word of truth in my yarn. The unfortunate Newman, now living at Chislehurst, has gone quite blind, and dictates all his articles to a secretary.

May I say that the most heartening thing, to me, in your letter, is the generous way in which you have forgiven me for the advice I ventured to write to you, in my last letter? Time and again since writing it, I've wondered if I weren't exceeding the limits of what you would permit in thus butting in, unasked.

May I add that anything I can do, now or in the future, to make your plans in England a success, that I will gladly do.

Very sincerely

L. A. Bethell

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**Letter 15, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1936**

IMG 0393

TELEGRAMS, MAGA, LONDON

TELEPHONE 10663 CENTRAL

37, Paternoster Row, E.C.

14 . V . 36

My dear Bailey,

Very many thanks for letting me see the enclosed, which I return, registered, as soon as possible, lest accident befall it – it is obviously valuable.

The whole thing is most tantalisingly allusive – and makes one impatient for the full facts underlying it – especially in your regard. But I suppose we shall none of us hear the full story of what happened during that time they were chasing you, until you can be induced to write the whole thing yourself. Helped out by what little I can remember of what you told me that time in Quetta, and a certain amount of my imagination thrown in, I was able to do no more than hint at it all in "Adedoids": but if

you could overcome your reluctance, the full story should make an epic. Queer that both your Russian friend and I should have

IMG 0394

been struck, identically, with the "Lawrence" parallel. It was fairly obvious to me, the tree that they were barking up all the time when he was in the Air Force at Nowshera. The Fritzes and the Frogs couldn't leave the topic alone – though, Lord knows, it was no intimate concern of theirs as it might well have been that of the Russians. I even remember seeing a "post war Lawrence" story – with illustrations in full – in one of the more décolleté French magazines: gaunt man on a camel, led along by a soi-disant Central Asian girl, bare to the waist and very "prominent". How inevitable is the French style: they always seem to drag horizontal exercise, or a strong hint of it, into everything they write.

Amusing to hear your notion of a "quiet time"; gathering bunches of tigers and fistfuls of leopards,

IMG 0395

in a kind of parenthesis. The Maharajah's 77 tigers and 24 panthers, in one camp, to his own gun! I can't think where you people find them all. It must be a regular cat farm.

All quiet on this front. Steady continuous daily hard work, but of the most varied description. To keep up the standard of the magazine contribs, and refuse to vary by a hair's breath. But Lord! You should see the rubbish that comes daily to my table. I've opened(?) "sex", but nothing else. Even murders are a very steady supply. I reckon I cast out 95%; of the remaining 5% only about one passes J.H.B. and G.W.B. So you can imagine what the bulk is like.

Once more, very many thanks for the enclosed. Let me know (a p.c. will do) if it reaches you safely because, if it doesn't, I shall be able to tumble over the post office folk. And if you do manage to fly back this summer, mind you halt here on your way to Norfolk, and break bread with me and Jim.

Very sincerely

L.A. Bethell

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**Letter 16, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1936**

IMG 0396

24 . IX . 36

Dear Mrs. Bailey,

I am full of apologies.

When, on Friday last, E. rang up at this office and failed to get me, I was away for two days seeing my wife off at Southampton on her way to South Africa – a combination of circumstances that also sent clean out of my mind my previous

intention to send him a wire, "Bon Voyage", at the last moment. Except for this contretemps, his phone call would have caught me.

*(E. Was F. M. Bailey to his mother - 'Eric' to distinguish him from his father, also Frederick)*

Have you knowledge of any last moment message he wanted to convey, or last problem to put? Busy as he must have been at the last moment, he is not the man to have taken time and trouble over two cables (as I am informed) without some good reason. Possibly, when you write to him, you could enclose this note – explanation as it is, as well as inquiry.

I was, and am, genuinely distressed about his eye trouble. Eyes so often depend on general good health, and one is left with the fear that not only in the climate of his present surroundings, a

IMG 0397

trial to him, but it must be the worst possible thing for a man who, throughout his life, has taken no trouble whatever about his well-being and has worked his long-suffering body to its last limits. For that reason alone, I welcome the fact that his work in Nepal is within measurable distance of its end. It was, past words, good to see him again. He doesn't change and old times came back, insistently, with every word and gesture.

Again, also, I was more than glad to resume, with you, a contact which, in Dorking, now seems a long while ago.

Very sincerely

L.A. Bethell

I have written that I did not know exactly what it was you wanted to say on the telephone but know it was either about his or your work and that you would write him yourself.

=====

**Letter 17, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1938**

IMG 0398

107, Hillfield Court,

Belsize Avenue,

N. W. 3

Monday, 20 . VI . 38, 9pm

My dear Bailey,

I've only this moment got your letter of 17th – hence my apology for delay in answering. I was away from office over the weekend.

I'm really glad to know you are within arm's length once more: particularly as I have practically finished the book of which I spoke when last you were at home.

Hinged on a purely fictitious story of our doings together – yours and mine – in Mishmi land – all names altered and unrecognisable including yours (= “Drummond”: not even “Barclay”). Two critics who have seen the partly completed work tell me it is likely to be a marked success: I am therefore more than

IMG 0399

ever anxious that you should “pass” it as containing nothing that you would object to. Naturally, it shall not go to George Blackwood (who awaits it) or to anyone else, until you have said it may go. If, however, you say “No”, it will mean my re-writing large chunks of the book, in fact, remodelling the whole thing, with consequent months – possibly a year – of hard work and delay. So I cannot over-express my hope that you will say all is well.

Thanks so much about dining at the “Travellers” tomorrow, Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup>. I shall look forward to it, and will be there at 8, as you suggest. But I quite foresee that in the press of your engagements, my delay in accepting may have involved you in filling up the day and the hour. If so, in other words if my coming is not convenient, please ring me up at office (City 1321) between 10 and 12:30 tomorrow, Tuesday. If you do not, I shall know that all is well.

Very relieved to hear that Mrs. Bailey is quite recovered.

Yours ever

L. A. Bethell

=====

**Letter 18, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1938**

IMG 0400

*(side note at the top left)*

I had made a whole chapter of Chang-Lo, but, after what you said, have reduced it to a page and have avoided the name of the place.

107, Hillfield Court,  
Belsize Avenue,  
N. W. 3  
7 . IX . 38

My dear Bailey,

Thanks for your letter.

It's perilously like butting-in in what you might rightly tell me is no concern of mine, but I view with increasing anxiety your intention of acquiring, even hiring, a house. Difficulties begin – not end – when you've succeeded in getting it. Experience tells me that, nowadays, by far the best plan is to get into a good roomy flat. By doing so, you shelve the worry of structural maintenance, repairs, rates, taxes, insurance,

garden tidiness, at least half the furnishing, drains maintenance, water rate, onto the shoulders of the landlord – whereas, by taking a house, the landlord piles them all onto you. You may say that I'm making a song about a list of trivialities – quite true, individually, but in

IMG 0401

sum total they add up to a respectable lump of worry and time expenditure. But mind energy and time are two things, nowadays, worth their area in five-pound notes. You've only got to think of the interesting, of the necessary, things you could be doing, if you weren't throwing away time and energy on avoidable matters. This funny old village of London is packed with worthwhile things to do see, hear, and engage one's energies in – and for a first-class brain like yours to let anything come in the way of them, is, I suggest, plain crime.

Different for a man who's half vegetable – there are many of them. But not you or I.

I know, now, I'd ten years of house, in probably the most worthwhile corner of the best county in England, but I wouldn't go back there now, and chuck what there is to do in Town, for anything.

However, as I say, my apologies. It's no business of mine, and I oughtn't to butt in.

IMG 0402

The book – “The Blind Road” – is finished, typed, sent to George Blackwood, accepted, given a final polish-up and a “map” and outer jacket, and should be out in 6 weeks' to 2 months' time (all proofreading still to do). Once again, my sincere thanks for the carte blanche you gave me to say what I liked. When you see it (I'll send a copy) I think you'll find I've said nothing offensive. And though the thing will never read as anything but fiction, it may (if it sells well) act as an efficient curtain raiser to your volume of memoirs, by stimulating interest in the man I've made my central character. As you, reading, may see.

Best luck, and write again when you're nearer coming back.

As ever

L.A. Bethell

=====

**Letter 19, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1938**

IMG 0403

107, Hillfield Court,  
Belsize Avenue,  
N. W. 3  
8 . VIII .

Dear Bailey,

The yak and the burrhab, sharing a stamp with an aeroplane!  
Who'd ha' thought it!

Mongolian airmail stamps.

What news of you?

Good hunting !

Yours

L. A. Bethell

*(Mongolian airmail stamps affixed, 25, 50 and 75 kopeks)*

IMG 0404

Envelope – assumed to previous letter:

Post marked 'London S.W.1, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1938', then 'Hampstead 8<sup>th</sup> August 1938'  
and then 'Newton Butler, Enniskillen, Co. Fermaragh 11<sup>th</sup> August 38' and with a  
general 'Empire Exhibition Glasgow' over the stamp.

1½p stamp

Addressed to –

Colonel F. M. Bailey, C.I.E.

Travellers Club, Pall Mall, S.W.1 *(crossed out)*

*then* – Buck Inn, Buckden, Skipton, Yorks

*then* – Crom Castle, Newton Butler, N. Ireland

*And noted – by Bailey in pencil 'Ans 12/9'*

=====  
**Letter 20, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1938**

IMG 0405

Please note new number —>

72, Hillfield Court,

Belsize Avenue,

N. W. 3

13 . X .

My dear Bailey,

Very glad to hear you are back, though distressed to hear that  
you intend deserting us again for Norfolk. This old village of London has its  
possibilities. I expect it will drag you back again, someday.

I am just off to Aldershot to stay with a pal, C.R.E., there, for a long weekend. Am "on leave" for the moment from the office – a three weeks due to me last July but which I have only now been able to take. Gives you some notion of what the work has been. But when I get back I'll ring you up – times as directed – and we'll fix a meeting. I've much to discuss with you.

You've only just missed a man I badly wanted you to meet, one Stanford, retired I.C.S.,

IMG 0406

junior partner in the Stanford map making firm. A keen ornithologist, and only 3 days ago sailed to join a composite party of shikar, exploration, and Natural History generally in N.E. Burma, in the little-known country between "The Triangle" and the Salween. He knows – or has heard – a lot about your birds, and was equally keen to meet you. But in the short time available I didn't know if you were back in Town, or where to lay hands on you. He will be back next April and anticipates a haul of unusual trove.

The proof reading of the book is finished, publication shortly. You shall have one of the first copies. I think it may be an efficient curtain raiser to any book of your own Memoirs you may publish, and send two for that purpose. At the least, it should rouse considerable curiosity and there are bound to be a number of the people who matter, who will be able to identify "Drummond" with F.M.B.

A bientot, then

Yours ever

L. A. Bethell

=====

**Letter 21, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1938**

IMG 0407

And, (I had almost forgotten) the best of Xmas wishes to both of you.

72, Hillfield Court,  
Belsize Avenue,  
N. W. 3  
18 . XII .

My dear Bailey,

Many thanks for yours of yesterday.

I lost no time in getting down to KINTHUP. I've been through your typescript twice, the second time confirming my first impression that a paper like this needs a map, however rough and diagrammatic, and as many illustrations of salient spots as you can lay hands on. You see, for all that Maga's readers are probably the best



generally educated in the land, there is still only a comparatively small proportion of them who know trans-Himalayan geography. To many of them Tibet is still a land of mystery, with a vague idea of “Younghusband” and “Lhasa” superadded – the whole in a background of mysticism, miracles, and Kim’s lama. And places like Gyantse, the Tsangpo, Po-me, even Sikkim, which present instant mental pictures to you and me, leave them – quite frankly – guessing.

IMG 0408

And when a man reads a paper which, he feels, has been inadequately explained to him, he's quick to pass on to something he understands better and can therefore take an interest in.

I say this with all the more confidence, in that I know it would be what George Blackwood would say, if I were to send it onto him.

I would therefore advise your getting together as many (clearly reproducible) photographs of salient places mentioned as you can, and then doing as you suggest – i.e. send it to the Geographical Magazine. Maga, as you know, doesn't handle illustrations.

None of which is any reflection on your paper. It is just inherent in the nature of the thing – that's all. The subject is an engrossing one, and should be welcomed by a responsible publication like the Geographical Magazine, especially when coming from you.

I am still anxious to hear from you that I haven't trodden on any of your corns, in “Blind Road”. At your full leisure, let me know. Of course, when telling the yarn, I had to twist you about, almost beyond recognition. But there are still many who may recognise you.

Yours ever

L. A. Bethell