

51 Gordon Square

W. C. 1 4987

Lady Day 1956

(11.25)

Dearest P

I hear from James that the family is returning round about April 15. I shall be very glad to see you all again, & hope you are really in better health. As I suppose the Bessys will fly, you will come overland I expect you will come rather in advance of them - Do get your reservations in good time.

The most important event here is a visit from a Miss Nicholls belonging to Clutton. Do not be alarmed at the story which begins badly but ends in a reassuring manner. She first appeared,

saying she wanted to measure up the house for the outside decorators. She nosed about, & before leaving came in to tell me that she had found some trouble in the woodwork in my bedroom.

She came back a few days later with a workman & then revealed that there was a small patch of dry rot. She swore that it had been properly cleared away & there was no danger of its spreading, but when they come to do the decoration they will have to clear out another piece of wood and mess up Elizabeth's bedroom. I feel quite sure however, from what she said, that there is nothing seriously wrong.

Elizabeth & Hubert - Gladys's young man, have been doing a grand work of repair in the drawing-room. The chairs now all stand up, their bowels are under control, & they

have clean & mended loose covers on them. A transformation scene!

I have had a call from Helen Auep, as usual with a tale of woe. Her wallet, containing (not much money but) cheque book, hospital ticket & various important papers had been taken out of her handbag while it was in her flat, ^{while everyone was there} who can have done it? An ordinary thief would surely have taken the whole bag,

ransacked it at his leisure. I at once said of course it was Baba.

Helen giggled & said she had accused her but Baba had denied it hotly, & said 'As if I would take your things without telling you!' But, said Helen, of course she often does.

Another question of Theft has arisen at No. 50. They have a completely wild

Sicilian maid, who of course has been befriended by Elizabeth. The other day she rushed madly in here, declaring that the Gaffers had robbed her of 10,000 lire! She was soon followed by a Gaffran emissary who pitched her own tale to Elizabeth. What the outcome of all this is I don't know.

Angela gave a grand cock tail party at her new flat in Belonge Avenue. Jamie & Alex & I drove up there in a cab & met many old friends. A young lady was introduced to me as Miss Priestman, & with amazing skill I at once said "Her mine" She says that Michel is on leave in France - I daresay you know this - & is hoping to be sent to Hungary - There was some talk of his wife & Miss P.'s fiancée who was standing by said she had a very distinguished brother & ^{they} were of high & noble birth. By way of joke I suggested they were descended from Genghis Khan, and

apparently this is the case!

James has written a marvellous introduction to the Glyndebourne Programme in which he points out that the point of G. is not in solo performances but in trained ensemble work. The star system is owing to the vanity of the stars - the pure artist would rather perform as ~~the~~ one of a team. Joachim preferred to play quartets rather than Caprices Venozes (I suppose Sarasate) & Karasina preferred to dance in Petrouchka to dying as a Swan in the spot light! I found this gratifying, but he says he will be jumped on for it.

I went to see Oliver yesterday. His health still seems ~~quite~~ good & his spirits not bad. Now that the weather has improved - we are having mild, sunny days - I hope he will get out for

walks, which I am sure are health
giving.

A curious thing - since you left
there have been no letters from
your boy. I think she must have
passed away.

Love to all

HCS.

Thank Jane for her letter - I will
answer presently.