

Remember me to aunt and uncle

**Hotel d Le Europe
Wed 13th**

To my dear Daughter

Well, we got here alright, without any trouble worth speaking about. The weather has been very fine until today and now it rains, heavily.

I keep wondering how you are going on and whether your holiday is turning out a success, how has my Cynthia gone on in the sands, and how her and your general health is.

I tell myself that it must be alright – I hope you are having some good weather at Rhos¹. I miss you both very much and feel very sorry we didn't chance it and all of us go together on our travels either here or where you are – but we must be careful in the future of our arrangements.²

I suppose you are doing meely³ with the girls and auntie and uncle (if he is there) and that "baby" is quite happy and contented.

Aunt Alice⁴ is very attentive to the boys⁵ and Aunt Sallie⁶ as well – they are having no end of a good time here and feel grateful I suppose, and ready to help when required. Montreux⁷ is a very fine town and the lake (Geneva) is very glorious – big mountains all around fine sunsets over the water and lovely moonlight nights making the whole place a dream of wondrous delight.

Last night, for instance, I was walking along the lakeside, alone, the boys were safely asleep in their comfortable beds (the others had also retired) and I had the mystical, wonderful, gorgeous beauty all to my little self – and words cannot describe the scene or transmit the atmosphere of quiet and peace.

The clouds and the moon. The mountains and the water. All shades of beautiful blue. At 12 p.m., birds singing over the waters and⁸ a lovely orchestra playing a quiet waltz from the Kursaal⁹.

¹ Likely Rhos-on-Sea – a beach resort in north Wales. Bess and Cynthia were there with an unspecified uncle and aunt.

² An interesting and slightly mysterious comment. Why must they be so careful?

³ Seems to spell M-E-E-L-Y. There is a board game called "Feely Meeley", so maybe some sort of game?

⁴ This is probably Alice Donnelly, Jon the Don's elder sister (by one year). She was born in 1874 in Manchester, married Charles Albert Chadwick on 13 January 1906. They had one daughter, Iris Chadwick, born in July 1906.

⁵ John Donnelly III (Jon the Don's eldest son) and Brian Donnelly (his youngest son)

⁶ Apparently, "Sallie" was previously used as a nickname for "Sarah". So Aunt Sallie is likely Jon the Don's elder sister, Sarah Donnelly, born in 1868 (and well into her fifties at the time of the letter). She married George Alisha Brocklehurst on 13 April 1895. They had two children – George William Brocklehurst (born 1897) and Alice Brocklehurst (born 1904), who would have been Bess/John/Brian/Cynthia's first cousins.

⁷ A Swiss town on the eastern shore of Lake Geneva, in the canton of Vaud.

⁸ I think when he writes "and" he means "like" and is using "orchestra" as a metaphor

⁹ Cannot work out what it means, but pretty sure this word spells K-U-R-S-A-A-L

Soft, warm air, gentle breezes, enchanting music and a quiet mind – all was too perfect.¹⁰

To get back to earth – we had a fine afternoon and log¹¹ at [Wembley]¹² and it is a great place in its way – but very tiring.

Next morning, on Friday, we got away alright and had a splendid crossing. Got to [Paris]¹³ – no trouble, plenty of time, and no rushing about. The Aunties were on the verge once or twice about their luggage, but I stroked¹⁴ them down and all was well. We had a good journey to Montreux, arriving about 10.00 Sat morning. Tired but quite alright.

The boys were rather fagged all the day – we all were in fact, but Sunday we were all nicely rested. Jack¹⁵ was the most tired of them all. Perhaps his gumboil¹⁶ had something to do with it (it busted on Sunday and his spirits immediately improved).

Sunday morning, we visited the famous Castle of Chillon¹⁷, and it is very interesting inside and out. I won't attempt to describe it. I hope you will see it for yourself soon. In the afternoon we went up the mountains to Les Avants¹⁸ – a lovely spot.

On Monday, the two Aunts, the boys and myself had a full day visiting the Great St Bernard Hospice¹⁹ – about a 150-mile motor journey, climbing 8,000 feet, and saw the famous place and dogs²⁰ and all the rest – a motor accident thrown in – quite a long story, which I must reserve.

Yesterday we funicularied²¹ up another high mountain and so on. Well, love to both of you.

From Dad

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¹⁰ Jon the Don seems to have gone from walking alone at night to listening to an orchestra and birdsong at midday. The letter is not clear, but we can be sure Jon the Don is off on one and clearly in a happy place. Probably by 12pm (midday) he meant 12am (midnight), he really did hear birds (I've googled it and there could have been midnight birdsong over Lake Geneva) and 'orchestra' is a metaphor.

¹¹ Seems to spell L-O-G. Maybe a synonym for walk?

¹² This seems to spell W-E-M-B-L-E-Y. Probably a place name. Doesn't seem like it can be the Wembley in London.

¹³ Must be a place name. Donna thinks it says 'Paris', which would make complete sense, but it seems to spell P-A-R-E-S as we assume they've travelled across the continent from the UK to Switzerland.

¹⁴ Pretty sure he writes "stroked", which he seems to be using as a synonym for "calmed"

¹⁵ His eldest son, John Donnelly III

¹⁶ I think this literally refers to a boil on the poor chap's gum

¹⁷ Castle of Chillon just south of Montreux: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chillon_Castle

¹⁸ Les Avants is a village in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland

¹⁹ The famous Great St Bernard Hospice at 2469m altitude at the Great St Bernard Pass in the Pennine Alps.

²⁰ It's the hospice that St Bernard dogs are named after and traditionally reside at

²¹ He's made up this verb to describe travelling up the Territet–Glion funicular railway, one of the oldest funiculars in Switzerland: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territet%E2%80%93Glion_funicular_railway