# England

Dear Friends:

WORLD-TRAVEL-LETTER NO.1

This series of letters is intended for all the co-workers of our “Western Auto Family”, and also for numerous other friends, so that I may share the pleasures of this trip with you as much as possible. Altho the letters will be written on this trip around the world and called “World Travel Letters”, they will not deal very extensively with all the countries which we shall visit, because we (my mother and I) will merely pass thru some of the countries, and have only a day or two in a place for sight-seeing.

Our goal on this trip is to see Palestine. Most of our attention and interest will be centered there. The letters will therefore cover that territory more completely than other places which we shall see, altho I hope to find some points of interest to write about as we pass thru the Suez Canal, over the Indian ocean to China and Japan, then to the Hawaiian Islands and to California.

The trip from Los Angeles to New York did not seem very much like part of a Tour trip, but rather like a business trip. We did not travel with others of the party, but stopped over at certain places to attend to certain business. This was mother’s first trip to New York, and she was very much interested in the big department stores, the subway, the tall buildings and the sights in general, especially the Woolworth tower (790 ft. high), from which we enjoyed a fine view as the day was quite clear. The voyage on the Atlantic has been quite uneventful, as the sea is smooth and the sailing beautiful for this time of the year. Our ship, the “Celtic” is a large British liner, which has accommodations for 1200 passengers including all classes, but travel is very light just now, so we are not crowded. While passing out of the New York harbor I took some kodak pictures of the water front and skyline of tall buildings, the Statue of Liberty, etc.

One event enroute, the Mask Parade, was quite interesting, especially the Indian War Dance, put on mostly by Britishers whom I do not suppose ever saw a real Indian. About a dozen men dressed up somewhat like American Indians, painted their faces and marched around beating a tom-tom and yelling. They tried to put on an Indian dance with typical yells. They did not imitate the Indians very closely, but produced a lot of fun for the crowd. They announced as the last number on their program, the newest American National Anthem, “How dry I am”.

Leaving London, enroute to Antwerp, March 7, 1928

WE LANDED AT LIVERPOOL

Our first view of England was at Liverpool, but the fog was so dense that we almost had to feel our way around instead of seeing anything. All we got to see in Liverpool was the meager view of the narrow, crooked streets from the docks to the railway depot, but as soon as we left Liverpool the fog lifted and I was very greatly surprised to see green grass, some of the trees beginning to show their leaves and signs of spring everywhere, while it was real winter in New York when we left there a few days earlier. England is much farther north than New York, but the warm Gulf Stream makes the climate much warmer.

As you all know it takes four or five days and nights to ride across the U.S. in a train, but from the western side of England to London it takes only about four hours. One would imagine that England with her many millions of people in such a small territory would appear crowded. The cities are crowded but the rural districts have rolling fields and pastures, with farm houses apparently no closer together than in many of our good agricultural states. The country roads are narrow and wind around apparently without any attempt to follow section lines and much of the hauling is done on boats in small canals, wherever the country is level enough for the canals to be used to advantage. The canal boats are only about six feet wide, but quite long, possible twenty or twenty-five feet, and they are drawn by a horse which walks along the “tow path” at the side of the canal. In all the four hours ride across country we saw only one automobile and two busses on the roads. It seems that automobiles are used very little except in the cities, where the streets are full of them. The first motor vehicle sighted, even before we landed on the dock, was a Ford truck. Quite a number of Fords are in evidence, but only two other cars were noticed in Liverpool and London, one Studebaker and one Chrysler.

NO SYSTEM FOR HANDLING BAGGAGE

One of the first annoyances to be experienced was the difficulty of getting babbage from one place to another. They have no check system and every fellow is for himself when it comes to looking after his trunks and hand bags. After we landed at Liverpool I went with the leader of our party to look after our things and see that they were placed on the London train. When all the baggage was examined in the customs dept. we had to have porters take it with hand trucks to a baggage-van where we watched to see that every piece was loaded; then told the man to take it to the railway depot and that we would meet him there. We took taxi cabs and went to the depot ahead of the load of baggage. When our truck arrived we had to identify every piece as it was picked out from among many other pieces. Ours was all assembled and carted to the waiting train where our leader watched to see that it went into the right car. I understand that such difficulty is experienced all thru Europe, as they are slow to adopt improved methods of doing things.

Oh yes, another thing I forgot to mention about the rural district; all houses and nearly all barns are built of brick, as lumber is very scarce. Nearly all buildings in the cities are built of brick or stone. Another queer sight was the small freight trains with little short box cars and open cars bobbing along thru the country. The box cars looked only about 12 feet long with four little wheels. A great deal of general hauling is done with little open cars with sides about two feet high, and canvas stretched over to protect the goods. That all looks like “monkey business” as compared with our freight hauling, but I suppose the short distances do not justify large equipment. The passenger cars all have side doors, five or six of them, one door to enter each compartment. A compartment seats 8 people.

\*ONE DAY IN LONDON

London, the largest city in the world, cannot be “covered” very completely in one day, but we were not supposed to “do” the city completely today. The rest of our party will have a week in London on their return trip. However, I am glad we could have even the one day in the great city while Mother and I are with the party. We have seen so much that I cannot begin to tell you about all of it, but will mention a few things of interest. As we shall be moving from place to place almost every day, my writing will have to be done under considerable difficulty. Most of the above writing was done on the train tonight from London up to the port (Harwich) where we embarked for Antwerp, and just now we are on our way across the North Sea. In this little state room there is no way to write except with the little portable typewriter on my knees, in the same fashion that I used it on the train. Tomorrow and next day we shall be very busy in Belgium and the trip to Cologne, so I must write tonight.

Our morning trip this morning took us by the famous Trafalgar Square, Lord Nelson’s Monument, Statue of George Washington, Edith Cavell Memorial, and numerous statues, memorials and monuments which possibly would mean as little to you as they did to me. The thing that impressed me most about their monuments was the fact that they have Washington and Lincoln right along with noted men of their own country. Our guide, Captain Willard, who served in the English army during the world war, said that the British now think it was providential guidance that caused the United States to pull loose and establish a great independent nation, and they honor our leaders among the world’s greatest men.

Our trip took us quite a distance along the River Thames (pronounced Tems) and over the London Bridge, about which everyone has heard, and back over the famous Tower Bridge. Altho you may be aware of the fact that a glib-tongued guide may feed lots of “taffy” along with interesting facts, you cannot help but be enthused with the surroundings in a city like London. One visitor remarked that “nothing seems to amount to much in Europe if it is not at least one thousand years old”. Many of the buildings now in use have been standing several hundred years. The guide pointed out the buildings of Parliament which he said had “just been put up within the last one hundred years”, and certain other buildings that he said were “new, just erected about 20 years ago”. The buildings, many of them are very attractive, expensively decorated, and appeal to all who can appreciate old Gothic architecture.

THE LONDON TOWER

Built in A.D. 1066, during the rule of William the Conqueror, who was the first Anglo-Saxon ruler of England, this historic place served first as a palace and then as a prison and later as a fort and now as a sort of museum containing relics of these early days, including the old beheading block and axe, instruments of torture, dungeons under the buildings and also a display of the crowns and jewels of kings and queens of centuries ago. Some of these crowns and jewels are used now on certain occasions. The most gorgeous crown, covered with brilliant diamonds and constructed largely of platinum, is said to be valued at over $150,000., and the entire collection of royal jewels is valued at over $3000,000,000.

The London Tower is not a single tower, as I had supposed, but a series of towers and buildings enclosed like a fort within great walls. Think of old stone buildings nearly one thousand years old and still in fine condition. The largest one has several stories, its walls are 17ft, thick at the base and over 100ft. high, with beautiful architectural designs. The masonry and arches show wonderful skill of the builders.

GREAT CATHEDRALS

Many Americans who travel in Europe say that one soon gets tired of seeing old Cathedrals and Temples. During the afternoon we visited St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. The latter was built in A.D. 1245 and is one of the ost beautiful to be seen. St. Paul’s is very large, the entire building being over 500ft. long, and the tower 365 ft. high. The ceiling ages during which these wonderful buildings have stood, the infinite skill exercised and labor expended, and the great courage shown by the people who lived in these early days, inspire reverence in the heart of everyone who will stop and think seriously.

THE ROYAL MEWS

The mews, or stables, where the Royal horses and coaches are kept, are like palaces. The large place we visited occupies considerable ground, with pace to exercise the horses, (or ‘orses, as the keeper called them.) The Royal family has 66 beautiful horses and nearly a dozen fanoy coaches. The State coach, built in 1710, is very large (weighs 4.5 tons) and is decorated almost like a piece of jewelry. The harness (pronounced ‘arness), and saddles are decorated with trimmings made of brass, some of them gold plated. Quite a crew of workmen is required to keep all these horses, coaches, harness and saddles in fine condition.

One thing that especially interested me was the English manner of speech. It is hard to understand a regular Englishman, and they use such odd terms, altho possibly entirely correct, when they might just as well use plain Yankee language. I promise they think we have corrupted the English language terribly. On the roads or streets they do not have the ourt sign “Slow down” or “drive slow” like we do, but their signs say “Caution, drive slowly”, or at intersections where pedestrians are to cross the sign says “Please cross here”, and a hand painted on the sign points the way. I suppose they think Americans ways are rude and uncouth.

Friday morning, Mar. 9, 1928.

Yesterday was spent seeing the sights in Flanders Fields, and we did not return until very late last night, so there was no opportunity to write yesterday. I must finish a few things about the English before I leave the subject. During the two days in England I heard several expressions that amused me and I think they will interest some of you.

If you wish to buy a “spool of thread”, you must ask for a “reel of cotton.”

You have not baggage, but “luggage”.

There are no baggage trucks. They are “luggage vans”.

The driver of the truck is not a driver, but a “carman”.

Coal is never called “coal”, but always “coals”.

The dining car is called a “restaurant car”, and the waiters are all “stewarts”.

The hotels have no elevators, but have “lifts”.

In all buildings the main floor is the “ground floor” and the next floor up is the “first floor”.

Lemonade is always “lemon squash”.

The depot master paces the platform wearing fine clothes and a silk stove-pipe hat, which they always call a “top hat”.

A package is always a “packet”, especially parcel post packages.

Buying goods on the installment plan is known as “hire-purchase”.

A freight train is called a “goods train”.

Their curio stores are called “curiosity shops”.

They have not “For Sale” signs on buildings. The signs say “To be sold”.

In the hotels you are not a guest, but a “resident”.

Ordinary shoes are called “boots”, and boots are called “top-boots”.

Overshoes er rubbers are called “galoushes”. If you ask for rubbers, they think you mean rubber bands to put around a bundle or paper.

If you order biscuits for breakfast, you get crackers. With the English, crackers are fire-works.

Gasoline is always “petrol” or “motor spirits”.

Policemen are not cops, but “Bobbies” or “Peelers”; so named in hor of Robert Peel, who several generations ago originated the police system.

The watchman in the grounds of the London Tower are called “beef-eaters”. They must have had at least 30 years service in the army before they can be given this job.

Money is not currency, but “specie”, and it is carted in open wagons from one bank to another in large quantities by two unarmed men, and no policemen are required to protect the money. The policemen themselves carry no firearms but carry a club called a “baton”.

I went into a department store to make a little purchase. Upon stating what I wanted I was told to “please take the lift to the first floor”, meaning the basement. I learned later that this store has been owned by the same family for over 400 years and always operated on the same corner; of course the building has been rebuilt possibly more than once.

Our guide pointed out one bridge over the Thames which is arehed a little, causing pedestrians to walk up grade and then down grade. He said very few English people walk over it, but they walk several blocks around to cross a flat bridge. I asked him why that was and he said, “what you call English pig-headedness”.

Oh yes, another remark made by the keeper of the ‘orses in the Royal stables. He pointed out a very fine horse which he said was used in the world war by the “Earle of Egg”. I learned later that he meant “Haig”.

This will be all about the English. There was plenty more to be learned, but time was too short. In the next letter I shall tell you something about our visit today to the Flanders fields and our boat trip up the Rhine. We are now on the train enroute to Cologne. The father one goes among other nations, the more our own country is appreciated. In this car the notices are posted in four languages; French, German, Flemish (Belgian) and English. Some mixture of talk and variety of money to handle in the many little count ies! But the trip is well worth while.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE PEPPERDINE