

V.T.

Sept 21/37

My darling love,

This letter must be finished before breakfast, for if Francesco comes, we are to see all the other sea grottos which will take till the after noon; if he doesn't come, we shall go up Solaro and perhaps to Ventroso and be out as long. So as soon as I hear Carolina's knock, I must stop - but as yet that is more than an hour away. B tells me with a twinkle that when she asks Carolina after calling me how I am, she replies in solemn tones, "The Signorino works". B knows as well as I what my work is! But there is a chance that I shan't accompany the others on whichever expedition they go. It depends on my head. I shouldn't have mentioned this had you not often asked me to tell you how I really feel. My headache has now settled in the nape of my neck, and got worse throughout yesterday, though it was never really bad. It feels more like a stiff neck, and therefore I am specially sympathetic to you. I rubbed some stuff on it last night and it is now a little better. Roger was thoroughly cheerful. After I had insisted that it was not sunstroke but only a very slight touch of the sun, he said, "Oh, even that's quite serious. It's a mild form of meningitis. You've noticed that your resistance to the sun is much weaker now, and that'll probably last for the rest of your life, or at least for many years". But B and Hilda, who do after all live here, say that it happens to most visitors, and quite soon passes off.

Now I must go back and continue my narrative. After leaving Pompeii we crossed the promontory, the mountains here having sloped down and given way to a plain which stretches south beyond Paestum. The road

was straighter and faster here, but fairly often dotted with villages. Our car was equipped with a piercing electric horn, which the driver hooted very nearly continuously, whether we were in a village or not. Hilda tells me that it is forbidden to hoot in Italy save in exceptional circumstances, but this rule is so universally disregarded that its observance by a single driver would be attended by all the perils of unilateral ~~diar~~ disarmament. We did indeed protest to Signor Cicillone, but he replied that he would rather annoy us than kill pedestrians. Faced with this crude alternative we kept silent.

The country round us was of extraordinary fertility. Besides all the normal kinds of farm produce (except corn), there were vines, oranges and lemons - these three often growing intermingled - as well as olives and further on tobacco. But the villages were dirty and smelly, the houses insanitary and often falling down. This combination of richness and squalor I find very difficult indeed to appreciate. It is I know the beginning of "the flat mind", over which Anne chides and ridicules me mercilessly. Somehow I think that, by far subtler methods, you will eventually overcome it in me. (Looking back, I notice that "Flat" is ambiguous. I mean it of course in the B.M. sense). The heat was now grilling as we passed over a ceaseless plain, where overlaid and dejected horses crept miserably from village to village. Towards Paestum a sprinkling of oxen were to be seen on the roads, as well as a great many in the fields where they are also used in the north of Italy. But near Paestum black water-buffaloes appeared, very fierce creatures by repute, though they looked mild enough plodding along with heavy loads. Much of this land was useless until it was reclaimed and afforested recently by Fascist works, and a good deal of the State tobacco is now grown on

it and prepared in large factories on the spot. So we reached Paestum. I will describe the temples and their surroundings first, and then tell you how we saw them.

It was of the greatest interest to pass in a few hours from the magnificent remains of one civilization to those of an earlier one which it had in many ways copied. I have said that ~~Paestum~~ Pompeii preserves a sense of isolation even in the midst of modern surroundings; but it excludes these merely to push forward an eager life of its own. Paestum is equally isolated, for it stands on a large plain, almost bare of buildings, bounded on one side by the sea and on the other by distant mountains. This remoteness, however, is accompanied by a sense of infinite solitude, and a serenity which I have only known approached in certain symphonies and in a few of our great cathedrals. The ruins of Paestum consist mainly of three temples, the Basilica, the Temple of Ceres and the Temple of Neptune. They are of normal Greek design, like the Parthenon, save that they are unadorned by friezes and their capitals are unlike the classical types, for they are of very early construction having been built by a colony of Magna Graecia in the sixth or seventh century B.C. All the temples are of the most majestic and splendid proportions, but the finest is Neptune, which is built of a faintly golden stone, throwing back the evening sunlight in a blaze of colour. This temple is also the most intact, for almost all its columns remain standing; and within it you notice immediately an atmosphere of peace, making you wish to sit for ever on the bare steps of what must I think be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

When we arrived we sat down to our lunch on the banks of a little stream. My food, perfectly prepared and packed by B, was in great demand,

but I jealously guarded it! Catherine, whom we had only met at the car in Pompeii, was by now in a better temper, and the three of them lay down in the shade of a small olive tree to sleep, while I set off to explore the great walls surrounding Paestum, which I have been told belong to a civilization even older than the Greek.

And at that very unsatisfactory point I must again stop, leaving the rest for a letter which will not reach you until you have already seen me, indeed spent a whole day with me. But that itself proves how marvellously close we are to seeing one another. You have made a special difference to these last days in Capri. Always before the thought of leaving has been so utterly hateful that I have had to pretend to there being longer time than really remained. But now for the first time I am equally balanced between the wretchedness of leaving B and Hilda and the joy of returning to you, so that I can allow myself to slide forward on the natural course of time. B and Hilda have been perfectly sweet about you - especially B, who last night was asking me whether you would meet me in London, and how we should spend the next day together; when it must have been hateful to her in one way to think of my being gone, as it was a pleasure for her in another to think of me being happy with you.

It is after breakfast now, and Francesco has not come, so that the walk to Solaro is the plan for the day. My head is a little worse than it was in the morning, and if the very strong sun now shining makes it worse still, I shall point out the way to the others and return at once. So this is the last you will hear of me from Capri before I see you. I shall write to you to-morrow, so that you shall see everything of the holiday as it looks to me from this end, but I doubt if you will get it

by Saturday. If you come to meet me then, and have got any of your new clothes, wear them for me, darling, so that I can see you at your loveliest. And don't be prevented by the presence of the others from giving me the kiss I long for. I have been thinking of you so much these last days on that beastly hunt for a job, wondering how you have fared. There was no letter from you yesterday, and I did miss it so.

No good-bye, dear. So I am keeping the other writing, and they will pass the record. So all my love & kisses to you.
Belong. Ray
