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Darling Mummy,

It is so lovely and hot now that I am sitting on the steps outside our apartment. I have to wear my dark glasses, and I think I shall soon be so baked as to have to go indoors. This last week ~~x~~ has been quite a full one. First there was the meeting at the Tuttles' house which I mentioned at the end of my last letter. Dinah was feeling miserable as the result of some digestive disorder (now quite gone) and so I put her to bed, she insisting that I go to the Tuttles. The meeting was a very interesting one, in that it turned out to be the launching of a documentary film movement in Hollywood. It has always seemed strange to me that this did not spring up long ago, but of course it has not had until very recently (as it did in England 12 years ago) the encouragement and finance of the government. Non-profit making organizations always take a good deal of getting started in private hands. There was therefore a remarkable degree of similarity in what was discussed at this meeting and what occupied the minds of Grierson and his followers even before I joined them; and this gave a curious air of immaturity to the speeches of people who were well-known in the commercial film world, and whose words on that subject would be listened to with respect in English film circles. Together with this went the slightly conspiratorial atmosphere which often occurs when people broach new ideas in company and are a little afraid of what they hear themselves saying for the first time.

It was for this kind of reason that, in the general discussion which followed the showing of a short election film some of the people had made, I ventured on a short speech, hoping that it would not be considered impertinent from a newcomer to the group and a foreigner at that. But my fears were quite

roundless, for everyone seemed to think that the English experience in documentary films could teach them valuable lessons. And I was all the more gratified when, by the elaborate mechanism of secret ballot, I found myself elected to an advisory committee which is going to report back to the main body on the concrete possibilities of launching a documentary film movement. This committee has its first meeting to-morrow evening, and though I shall be very sorry to have to leave Dinah again, she is most anxious for me to take advantage of this opportunity of giving some help.

With the exception of a couple of days, the weather has continued to be marvellous, the temperature climbing to 85 or so each day at noon and sinking to about 45-50 at nights. You can see from these figures that you have to go out in the evening prepared for very cold weather by comparison, or you might catch bad colds. So far we have both escaped them, in large measure I am sure on account of the marvellous Jaeger rug which covers us up each night. It is so deliciously soft and light that there is always the greatest temptation to make use of it, even when the evenings begin warm.

On Tuesday evening we went to a slightly grand party (by our standards) given by Mr and Mrs Frank Butler, friends of Kenneth Warren whom I met at his beach house in the summer. Mr Butler is one of those ne'er-do-weel Englishman who have succeeded in doing surprisingly well in a foreign country. Sent down from Oxford, and rather hurriedly despatched from England to Canada by his father and told to keep out of the way, he returned to France in command of a (I forget what unit) of "Mounties" during the War, and then went to Hollywood and got into the film business. He is now one of Paramount's most highly-paid writers, and maintains in two very large houses himself, his young and beautiful wife, and the progeny of a complicated series of marriages and divorces. A very handsome and well-built man of around 55, he pays devoted lip-service to the culture he formerly despised and reverences an England from which Oxford is all but sentimentally excluded. The very soul of charm and courtesy, he mars the English atmosphere he is trying to create by an almost slavering attention to his women friends, paying them exaggerated compliments and kissing them with

rather indiscreet frequency. I fully expected him to bestow a kiss on Dinah, but he seemed to have had his fill of Betty Warren! She (this is Dinah now) looked very lovely in an evening dress of which I can get no technical description from her to give to you.

As both my typewriter and I are baked, I went indoors at this point. Yesterday evening, when I was driving from the studio to UCLA to get a book from the library, I saw a long line of fire rising from the far crest of the Santa Monica Mountains towards the sea, and spreading a great pall of smoke over West Los Angeles. My first thought was that it was near the Greene's house, and I found later that Charlie (who was driving home through Beverly Hills at just this moment) was thinking the same thought. When I got higher, however, I could see that the fire was very much nearer the sea, and news bulletins later said that it came down so close that those who lived in the beach houses on this fashionable coast were driven to take refuge in the chilly waves before they could be rescued by boats. A number of palatial houses in the mountains have been completely destroyed, including that of Sam Wood, the MGM director who is doing Mr Chips in England now and whose daughter we had met the previous night. When I came out of the library last night it was dark, and looking directly westwards across the foothills the skyline shone with jagged crimson, like the flames which surround the sun's disc when it is eclipsed.

On account of going to Pasadena last Saturday to see Charlie Pratt, we missed the Toscanini concert. His rather eccentric tastes in music are being given free rein this season, and he lavishes his genius on works which do not really deserve it. Thus a fortnight ago we were treated to the overture to "Dinorah" by Meyerbeer. That man is a kind of musical Selfridge! We did, however, hear a most excellent performance of Peer Gynt (play and music) given by the Federal Theatre Project, incidentally a most interesting organization. The effect of the entire play was surprisingly well conveyed in the short compass of an hour, and Peer himself was played with great dramatic strength.

It would have been nice to have had a letter of yours to comment on, but none has come this past week. To-day is Thanksgiving Day, a national holiday, and that