

Symon letter 9

Private Mailbag, Wynbring Siding, E-W Line, SA, 17/4/42

Has the Public Library Arthur Mee's books on its shelves? They are all 'England' and again 'England' to tell us all what we are heirs to.

Dear Kilmeny

Thoughtful indeed of you dear young friend to send me the Strand and let me see how changed our dear England is. God bless and keep her and her great and fine people. Standing up with their courage and cheerfulness in the midst of such horrors as they have passed through. It is a remarkable thing in the British character that it can still keep up its fine levelheadedness, its determination to fight to the end and its fine principle always evident, opposed though it is throughout by unbridled savagery of every imaginable and unimaginable description. Those two British attributes, 'personal honour' and fine principle are, under God's protection, the very core and heart of Empire Government. We must never let these two great qualities become submerged. I hear from dear Arthur Mee who is such a great worker for God and King and Empire, but only occasionally, mails being uncertain. He has just passed his Jubilee as a writer, and I am enclosing his own account of those fifty years of steady work: His last books, "Story of the Flag" and "England 1940" were wonderful books. He sent me a copy of his "Story of the Flag" with such a kindly dedication to me written on the fly leaf, that, though I longed to keep and treasure the history of the Flag of Empire as it really is, I thought of our Labour Ministry not one of whose members really know what the empire is, has been and what it means to us all, especially Australia and I sent my copy of the book to the Prime Minister, asking his acceptance and expressing my hope that he would place it on the shelves of the Labour Members' Section of the Parliamentary Library at Canberra!! I hope it may be read and studied someday by the Labour Members!!

I am in a cleft-stick here dear Kilmeny. I haven't had personal communication with anyone of my own kind since I arrived here last March ('41) and as you know my gregariousness you will feel for me. I had my birds – blue wren, finches and other wee birds but a butcherbird family came and ate them all and now I've only a lame old crow whom I must feed but don't like his presence in my Tom Tiddler's ground. I have all my Dickens and live at home with him and joy and sorrow with his creations. Those you kindly lent me I've never read without your presence nearby and when I close them I think and say, "It is you, dear Kilmeny who has given me Bella Wilfer and Kate Nickelby and Esther Summerson and all the rest of the company, and so it is to you I am indebted for this lightening of my complete solitude.

Thanks so much for the little "Strand". Like all England it is doing its "durndest" in this crisis. I am forwarding it on to some connections in N.S.Wales whom I found in Sydney on my visit there last March. I only get the 'Mail' and 'Advertiser' (Saturday's issue, a week or more after their publication and so, as Arthur Mee wrote of me lately in one of his C. N's I am "Far from this Madding World" but Dickens is my "Stabilizer".

God bless you and keep you dear Kilmeny and may the days grow brighter and nearer to Victory as they pass but we must all put all our heart and nerve and sinew into our Service,

Lovingly Daisy M Bates

