

15 Egerton Gardens
London S.W. 3
January 20, 1970

Dear Marjorie:

Ruth and I have been in London for two months now and feel, as is so often the case, as if we have been here always. We even forget to do the tourist things, which we really want to do, and sometimes a week will go by that we are unable to chalk up any definite "achievements". Still on the unchecked list are the Tower of London and the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace. I need neither of these actually but it is usually expedient to get such matters out of the way to guard oneself against carpers at home. Of course we have done so many other things that provide deeper enjoyments and perhaps deeper insights into London than are available to the average tourist, but we simply experience these and do not chalk them up. Thus we were taken by a friend on a trip around Hampstead, visiting a Pub just at the 2 o'clock closing time (PM) and just managing to squeeze through the jolly crowd and get our ales together with sausages and half sandwiches - all for less than a pound and all very delicious. They were roasted beef sausages, most succulent. That same afternoon we went to a little know place, Kenwood, which had been given to the nation by the Guinness family. It was out in the country and yet would you believe it, the place contained a Franz Hals and Rembrandt paintings. And hardly any protection. The British ~~man~~ do this sort of thing, the left hand thing, rather well I think. We have also been out to Marlow where the Complete Angler is located prettily on the Thames; but other than this we have not stirred much from London. Marlow is only 13 miles from London, we are told, and yet the Thames takes 70 miles to get to London. By the time it reaches the city it is so polluted that when a policeman falls in in line of duty it is standard operating procedure to pump his stomach out. A few days ago a Dolphin was sighted up the Thames and there is little hope that he will survive this frightening experience..... Tonight we go to Hampstead to a very small club theatre "Opening" featuring one player, the son of Yul Brinner, and tomorrow evening we see another opening on the West End, guided again by our English friend, ~~man~~ Norma Paulson. Get this - we met her through Harold Loeb who was, as you know the Robert Cohn of THE SUN ALSO RISES. So one way or another, Marjorie, old Hem stays in the picture - although not too aggressively these days I'm afraid. At the moment as I may have told you I am working on a long project involving Donald Ogden Stewart, part of the Bill Gorton character of THE SUN. I see him again this weekend, this time with his wife, Ella Winter, who was formerly the wife of Lincoln Steffens the old muckraker. Miss Winter, I'm afraid, is no favorite of mine. She is a lifelong Communist, which is her privilege, but like many of these gentry she seems to paint history in a rather distorted fashion. According to her Joe McCarthy still rules America and anyone wanting peace is chased from the land. Russia is still the only place that she loves, although in later years she has been much impressed with the great solidarity of the Chinese people. Well enough of that....For reading I am enjoying the biography of Thomas Wolfe by Andrew Turnbull whose recent suicide distressed me rather severely - at age 48. Depression I suppose or something inside his head. Very sad. You know reading about these literary geniuses one gets a feeling of how similar they are in their pettinesses and exaggerations and extravagances and excesses and disloyalties. A Jewish girl really made old Wolfe but as soon as that happened he tied the can onto her. And he was so shy and so arrogant - just like Hemingway - although Wolfe actually was a much less complicated and less sophisticated person. They were all louses it seems. Literature, apparently, is not produced by the Boy Scouts of the world,