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Converse, Charles. Letter to Family.

Manchester, England

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Manchester, 3
Jan. 18, 1940

Dearest Dottie and Kiddies,

Here I am in my new office and how very strange it seems as you can well imagine. I arrived here yesterday afternoon at 3:30. George met me at the train and we came up to the office first for a few minutes and then went to the Midland Hotel where George had reserved a room for me. It is the only good hotel in Manchester, very nice though. At any rate I won't remain there long but will get busy immediately and start looking for a flat. I am afraid that it will be a rather difficult job to find something satisfactory. There is naturally no such choice as there is in London but I hope to find a little place that I can fix up with some of our own things. If you are not comfortable in your own dwelling, I should imagine Manchester would be pretty deadly. The town itself offers very little. It is a dreary looking place at best and at this time of the year it is awful. I understand however that the country outside is very lovely.

I had such a rush of it the last two weeks I was in London that I had no opportunity to settle down long enough to write a long newsy letter. You can appreciate just what a rush it was getting cleared up at the office after being there for almost six years and attending to the packing of the furniture at the same time. Fortunately with all of the wives evacuated, I was spared any heavy social activity. It was hopeless to sell the electric washing machine but I turned the refrigerator back to the gas co. Everything else I had shipped up here except the two rugs which Cliff said you gave to him, the rugs in Laura's and Sonnie's rooms. Davies Turner sent the stuff up by motor van and it is here now in storage. I will get around to see it today or tomorrow. Every day I become more convinced that it is very foolish and expensive as well as troublesome to own a lot of furniture. Maybe I will be able up here to dispose of the washing machine and other things that are surplus.

Everyone was very sweet to me before I left the office and I feel that they really hated to see me go. I didn't realize how much a part of the place I had become until it was time to leave. I hated like the very devil to leave. I think though that I am going to enjoy Manchester and working with George. Believe me I am pleased that you are spared all the dirt and fog here. You can't keep your hands clean 30 seconds and that is no exaggeration. This is a very important and wealthy industrial city. George says that the people are most friendly and hospitable and he really likes it. His wife is in the US but he is tied up on a lease until August. He mentioned my living with him but as we both realize doing that would mix up the question of rent allowance. I don't know what the Department will do in that direction whether they will classify me as a bachelor or as a married man with my family only temporarily evacuated. We've decided to try for the married allowance but it might not work. This question of finances gets worse. I am afraid that I will also get a lower post allowance than in London. As a matter of fact I am sure that I will but the cost of living should be lower. I can only try it out for a month or so and see how it works out. At any rate the bank is paid off. What a comfort. That £15 a month hurt.

As I said everyone here, that is London, was sweet to me before I left. The officers gave me a fine silver cigarette box inscribed "for our colleague and friend". Mr Erhardt presented it to me in the presence of all the officers and I had to make a reply which wasn't good nor bad either although the others were kind enough to say that it was very appropriate. Mr Erhardt said some extremely nice things that I very much appreciated. The nicest surprise I had however was a beautiful fountain pen with stand of green marble with a very suitable inscription engraved on a silver plate. There is also a note pad on the marble slab. All in all it is a very impressive gift and was presented to me by the members of the staff. I was very touched for it was a real token of friendship. The day I left I had lunch with Mr Erhardt at the St. James Club. Monday night I had dinner with Jeff Revely. Saturday I went to a little poker party given for me by Russ at his flat. Those present were: Jeff Reveley, Walton Ferris, Paul Seddicum and ~~XX~~ I. Ed was feeling rotten and couldn't go. We had a very good evening, no one lost much. I broke even. I had a number of invitations including Bim Brown and Ted Achilles to go out and spent the night in the country but turned them all down. I haven't been feeling too well and tire very easily. The strain of leaving London was bad enough without piling a lots of parties on top of it.

The pictures came and they are lovely. I don't know which I like best but believe that I prefer the one that you used for a New Year Card. The cards arrived the 16th and I mailed them the same day. I sent a few around the office besides the ones you had sent over. The others I will send out as names occur. The mails are so slow now that there is no need of feeling badly as to time of arrival of anything. Your letters have been taking approximately one month to come over. I was surprised to hear that you had not received one of my letters for I have sent them all via Air Mail. The service has been much delayed recently because of bad weather. Bob Ewer finally sailed on the Rex out of Lisbon. It was impossible to get any assurances as to the departure of a Clipper ship. We had a letter from him from Lisbon stating that Cile is well on the road to recovery now so there was no urgent rush.

There is very little London news to pass on. The office continues on the same, swamped with immigrants. Aside from that, the work has fallen off considerably. The name of my friend is James McKenna. Don't write to the Department grossing. It only gets us into their bad books. Take what comes and do the best you can is the best motto for this service. I am sure. Everyone thought the picture grand and send their love to you all. I haven't received the Christmas letters from the children yet but hope to receive them soon. I know that you are enjoying the lovely Florida sunshine and all of your old friends and new ones. Rationing is in effect now and its bad. Sugar, butter, bacon and soon meat. Two little lumps of sugar are all you are allowed at a meal. I suspect we will be even more closely rationed before it is all over. But what's the odds everyone's spirits are good. As soon as I have had a day or two to look around I will write fuller details of Manchester. Loads of love to each and everyone of you and take good care of yourselves and do write often. God Bless You,

Devotedly,

