

Three Trains, Three Planes, a Ship  
and an Etched Piece of Glass with a Silver Stand

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1964

29th January  
to 2nd February

First of all, about the ship : in my opinion the Queen Elizabeth is a quite remarkable object. Since she is 1031 feet long and Atlantic waves are about 150 feet long, provided that she travels approximately at right angles to them, these have little effect - and she has fins to prevent her rolling if the wind is in the north or south. Actually, although we had three days' bad weather out of four, the crossing was almost too smooth for my liking. However, I prepared three lectures in full and Margaret gallantly typed them out besides winning two competitions. Chess was very weak among the 1st class passengers.

The most impressive feature is the strong attachment of all the staff to the ship and to the Cunard Co. The ship's doctor, who gave us sherry one evening, had been on hundreds of trips and had collected many tales. Now he has far more work than formerly because he cures seasickness by injections. One of his successes, wife of an inferior chess player, asked me to guess her occupation. She works in an office and neither writes her own nor other people's letters. I failed to perceive that she only used the telephone, ten telephones, and is on the N.Y. Stock Exchange ; impossible for a female in London.

We practised for the next week by dressing up for dinner twice ; thus revealing unexpected defects such as frayed shirts and moth-eaten tie requiring attention. M's dress, however, was excellent. Some excitement prevailed on the last day because of news of a tug

strike in New York harbour. The captain, it was said, had once docked the Queen Mary without help and would certainly try this with the Queen Elizabeth ; otherwise we would have to land in New Brunswick or on Cape Cod. In fact he managed it, barely half an hour late, and got a great write-up in the New York Press.

There is the seamy side of the Queen Elizabeth. The chief engineer, who also gave us sherry, said he had been with Cunardx for 40 years. He had no regrets but looked forward to retiring to Liverpool. He considered that the trimmers and greasers had pretty lousy working conditions. There is still too much first class space in spite of recent improvements in 'cabin' and 'tourist' facilities. The engines are out of date in design and very uneconomical. The ship will be broken up in about twelve years' time. In spite of its speed of 30 miles an hour it is too expensive and people are thus being 'pushed ~~up~~ into the air'.

3rd February

At the Americana Hotel they said, 'Oh yes, we have a nice room for you on the 50th floor.' I said 'Surely you mean 15th ?' but top floor it was and with a terrific view of Manhattan. As expected, it contained T.V. (which didn't work), telephone by the uncomfortable beds, telephone in the comfortable toilet and static electricity in everything touchable. A taxi to my lecture at Brooklyn took an hour because of usual traffic jams and Dr Hellman almost had a heart attack as we arrived with one minute to spare. (For all subsequent lectures in New York I was even less successful in arriving on time.) Afterwards Herb Lichtman rescued us from a boring tour of laboratories and we were conducted to his house 30 miles away. He commutes every day along speedways. Close to the hospital is too tough a neighbourhood for bringing up the young without anxiety.

4th February

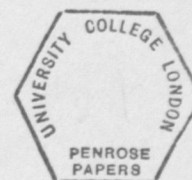
My morning was wasted by having to obey orders from the Kennedy Foundation to explain mongol mosaicism to a recalcitrant press conference and I had to listen to other victims, making similar attempts with their pet ideas : all completely useless because nothing was printed - perhaps just as well. Margaret had the morning free to search the city for possible purchases. The helpful Dr Jervis kindly arranged for Margaret to join us at lunch.

In the afternoon I had to lecture at the New York Medical Center. This was a rather technical exposition on the significance of ages of parents and order of birth. I hope it was interesting. Then there was sherry with Bert La Du and other ex-Galtonians followed by supper at the Hirschhorns. Bert took us back to the Americana rather late and I was feeling a bit confused and exhausted. No sooner had we got to bed than Roger telephoned from Austin, Bowman, from Chicago, sent a greetings telegram and Barr, from London, Ont. (but in the hotel) sent a demand invitation to breakfast with Mr Lester Pearson at 7.30 a.m. I was glad that we had been well rested on the ship.

5th February

This was the Day and I was secretly planning to vanish somehow but could not work out a feasible scheme quickly enough. Then I tried at breakfast to sit next to Joe Berg, who had recently arrived, or to some one whom I knew from Canada but I had no luck. Margaret was carried off to a distant table and I was pushed up on to a kind of 'high' table with the prime minister, who greeted me like a long lost friend in the best Canadian tradition. Mr Sargent Shriver, very affable, told the story that, since he had become minister, or equivalent, in charge of poverty, a friend had said to him, 'While





you were running the Peace Corps there was hardly any peace so now we expect there will be very little poverty'. Superficially he seems to me an efficient and friendly school master. With the governor of New Jersey (also attending the breakfast) I made little headway.

The result of all this was that I missed the first paper in the Kennedy Scientific Symposium but I arrived in time to hear Dr Lafon, expectant recipient of an award 'for service', explaining in very nice French how imbeciles should best be looked after. He went on too long and took 5 minutes of my 30 minutes' time. Conditions for reading scientific papers in one of the American Hotel Ballrooms were not likely to be optimal but I was surprised to find that the screen was much too small for my 2" x 2" slides. Attendance was said to be about 800 but the microphone was badly placed so that few people heard more than about half of most of the lectures. One speaker, I remember, said, 'the second hypothesis is the fact that...' and I fortunately heard no more.

After a hectic break for lunch, when I met Heine & Salome Waelsch, the meeting began again and it went on till 4.0 p.m. when, instead of having a discussion, we were all told to clear out for security reasons. The President was expected to arrive in another ballroom at 7.0 p.m. and the police were nervous.

Next problem was to get ready for cocktails before dinner. I think we were late but I was too dazed to notice. They gave me and the other awardees white carnations to distinguish us from ordinary guests. We were told that any man not in a tuxedo was either a dick or a photographer. The photographers seemed to be in the majority.

Introductions to the Kennedy family followed rapidly during which Margaret got permanently separated from me and the word went round that the President had arrived. The six awardees were given



their bits of glass and silver stands to hold by an official who had suddenly appeared and seemed to control all proceedings thereafter. We protested that they were not yet ours but this had no effect. President Johnson had to stand in the middle while a crowd of chattering and squabbling monkeys with cameras took some hundreds of photographs. We were then told to give 'our awards' back again and the monkeys clamoured for a 'take' of the President shaking hands with Lester Pearson. Next we all sat down on chairs in the order in which we were to sit later on the DAIS at the dinner. At the word go from the mysterious official we got up and marched in single file into the Imperial Ballroom where the banquet was set.

To my great delight I found myself seated between Mr Robert Kennedy and his wife. Both were entirely charming. Robert Kennedy had to spend most of his time preparing his own speech from his brother, Edward's, notes or making backchat with the President, 'How was your helicopter ?'

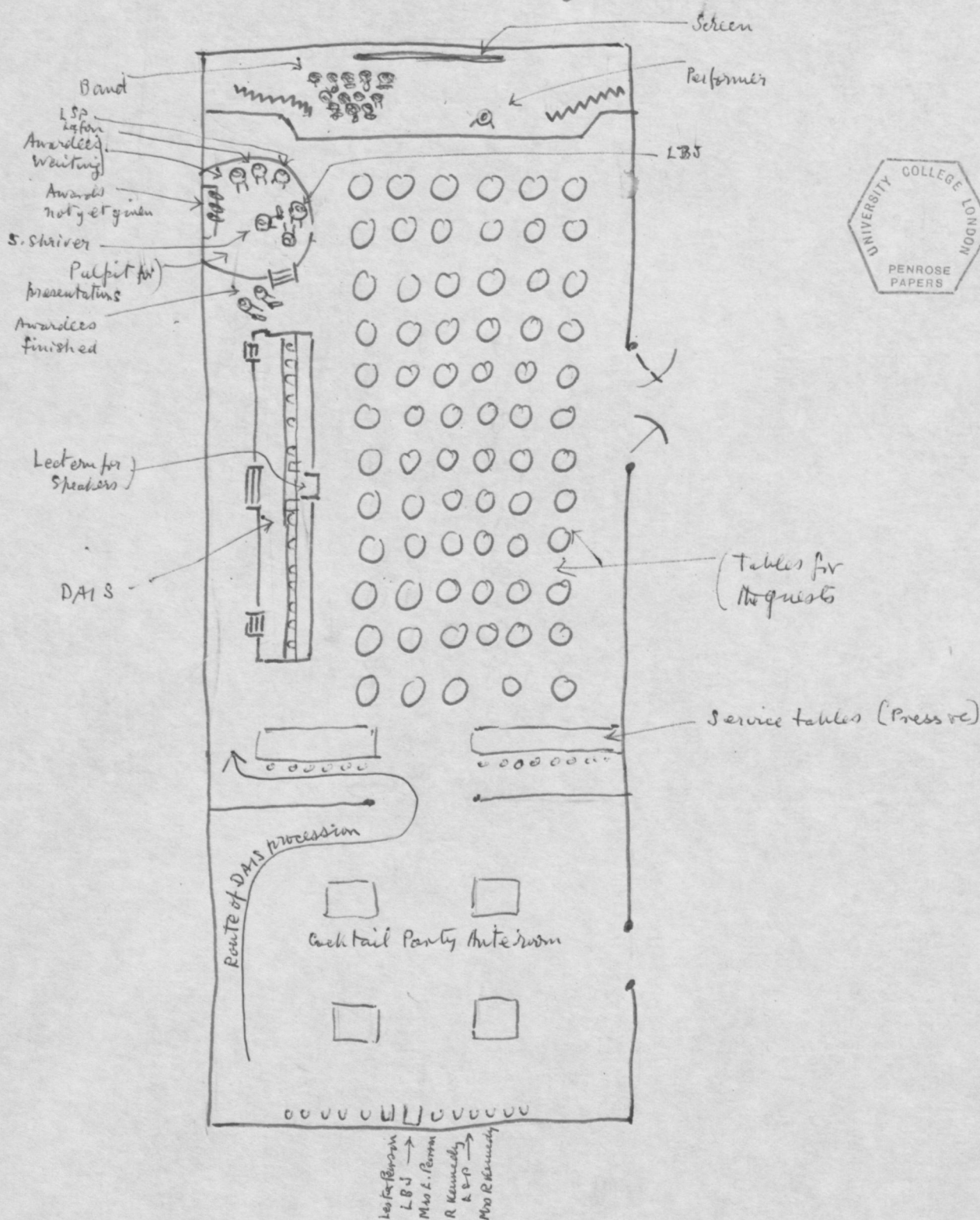
Mrs Kennedy asked me how I first got interested in mental retardation and I told her about the Darwin Trust. She seemed interested in some of my case histories also. Conversation was interfered with by distracting, though not remarkable, transparencies, of imbeciles (I should say, retardates) being tended by nuns, displayed on three screens in the hall simultaneously.

I tried to find Margaret in the sea of 1400 guests below us but could only identify where her table must be. Suddenly the famous entertainer, Jack Benny, appeared on a stage at the end of the room and television began. He did his best to make some witty remarks. His theme is always to pretend to be very miserly, 'tight' they called it. The President mentioned that Benny said once that the important thing about a joke was its length. I gathered that the

pattern of the whole show was determined by the exigencies of this medium<sup>(television)</sup>. It had originally been authorized, if not planned, by the late President so that everything had to be carried through to the letter. The idea was to boost work on mental retardation, and raise its status in the public mind. I cannot precisely remember the order of events but a well known singer, Nat King Cole, performed and Robert Kennedy gave his short address. Then, without warning, a film began and ~~I~~ to my horror I saw myself enlarged to prodigious proportions uttering platitudes. Mercifully this lasted only a few seconds and then it went on to something else - I don't know what because the awardees were at this point whisked away to a kind of pulpit and were given instructions. We were to shake hands with President Johnson and then receive our awards, this time for keeps. The instructor was, again, the unknown dictator and I had now decided that he was the director of television. The President seemed to take everything in good humour - all in a good cause was the atmosphere. Dr Lafon was told that his car was waiting for him after the ceremony but he said he knew nothing about it unless it was perhaps another present. As we were in the dark I could not see what the other awardees were doing. (I had spoken previously to Dr Grover Powers and pleased him by mentioning a paper of his on acrocephaly written in 1922. This and a wan smile from Senator Fogarty was about all the contact I had with the other ~~awardees~~ five victims at any time.)

The actual presentation, which I am told was televised in detail, was dominated by the anxiety that the glass objects would fall out of their silver receptacles, a catastrophe which everyone concerned had been warned to expect and to take precautions against. Mr Shriver saw that they were handed to the right people in turn.

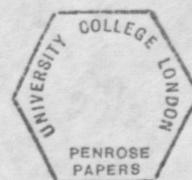
# Diagram of Proceedings in the Imperial Ballroom of the Americana Hotel on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1964



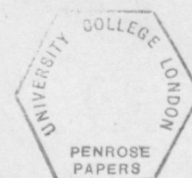


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*Illustrated London News. 15.2.1964 .  
L.S.P., Sargent Shriver, L.B.J.*



I think that the President was quite glad not to hold the things too long and this led to some confusion about hand-shaking. When it was all over the recipients had to trail about talking to their friends and well-wishers as politely as possible while holding these awkwardly shaped gifts and preventing them from being thrown on the floor by a sudden movement of a member of the crowd. Afterwards I tried to get mine into my pocket but the combination of a bulging contraption of this kind with a white carnation glued to the button-hole made me an object of some curiosity for the hotel residents in the lobby and the elevator.

Finally, when I was rid of the encumbrance and Margaret had reappeared we were conducted by Murray Barr, who seemed to be a born organizer, to a party at the house of Mrs Albert Lasker. This would have seemed like going into the lion's mouth since I felt embarrassed about not having accepted the Lasker Award in person (not to speak of having given their statue to Oxfam). However, Mrs Lasker was very gracious and, in any case, I could not help thinking that if the Kennedy Award lived up to expectations financially it would be just thirty times as much as the Lasker. Surrounded by fine specimens of French impressionist paintings but with conversation obscured by the noise of a small band and no elbow room even to drink from a glass, I met many distinguished people including the Canadian and British Ambassadors and Mrs Eunice Shriver. Mrs Shriver said she was glad that I was not as fierce as I looked in the photograph on the programme and wanted me to examine her friends' palms which I managed to be excused from doing. We went back to the hotel in a taxi with Murray Barr and a Mrs Rockefeller who seemed very gay. As soon as we arrived the telephone began again ; Nettie Breslin from Chicago was pleasant to hear but then I was asked to advise a Mrs Harris about her next pregnancy after having just produced a mongol. A journalist from the Medical World ~~Press~~ News called afterwards and so it went on.

6th February  
(Thursday)

Next day, in the morning, we went off to the Albert Einstein Medical School where Salome Waelsch had invited us for a lecture followed by a sandwich lunch. The lunch, at least, was good. Back at the Hotel, kept waiting fruitlessly by the fiendish journalist from Medical World News and also hoping for Jervis to turn up, we were horribly late for Alick ~~vs~~ Bearn's lecture date at the Rockefeller Institute. This was because President Johnson, still in New York, was blocking every other street and traffic, usually congested at this time of day - circa 3 o'clock, was almost at a standstill. So I had barely 30 minutes for an hour's talk. However, since I had just given the same lecture in the morning, on Human Triploids, I could present the subject with a minimum of frills and we just got through in time for a reception, at which Governor Rockefeller was making a speech. There had been time even for Dobzhansky to ask a brilliant question and to receive a rather feeble answer.

The reception turned out to be a tea party at which, again, there were lots of celebrities - we were getting a bit blasé by now. The famous Rous, doyen of cancer research, who discovered many years ago the transmissible Rous sarcoma, was delightful but he had to rush off to the great Zionist dinner where the hard-working President Johnson again was expected to make a speech. At that moment Detlev Bronk, head of American biological science, appeared and with him Lord Adrian. Finally, Alick, unperturbed as ever, took us off to his very superior apartment. We had a lovely relaxed evening there with Orlando Jack Miller and wife in attendance and Dobzhansky as the centre piece. I commended Mrs Harris to Jack's safe keeping. Margaret considered that the supper was quite special and indeed it was.



7th February  
(Friday)

We walked out of the Americana early, leaving the Award behind, with a nod to the office clerk and a mention of the Kennedy Foundation without any question of demands for payment, and took the train to Philadelphia. Bill Mellman was there with his car and he conveyed us in a leisurely manner to the Children's Hospital. It was good to be away from the bustle of New York. In this town there are many mid 19th century streets, as in some parts of London, formerly residential having become rather dirty and now being Chelseafied. My lecture was a sort of lunch hour affair, quite over-crowded, with an audience, at first somewhat critical but developing ultimately almost enthusiastic as they were initiated into the mysteries of dermatoglyphs and disease. One curious incident at the end was the self-introduction of a Dr Koblenzer, who said he had known my uncle who lived at Harstmonceaux and grew tomatoes but I had no time to pursue the matter further. We were moved on to see patients with peculiar chromosomes. Bill took us to another laboratory, where he seems to do most of his work, and then home to his very modern small house. His recently acquired wife was away on some job connected with a farm journal. The highlight of the evening occurred when, with an assembled party of his friends, we viewed TWTWTW, American style. All the Americans agreed that it was better than expected but that may have been politeness.

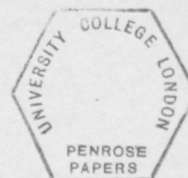
8th February  
(Saturday)

In the morning it snowed. Arrangements had been made for Bill to take us to a place near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where Victor McKusick would meet us for lunch. I was to be shown three mongols in a family of the Amish tribe whose females wear no buttons. They consider electricity an invention of the devil and abhor internal combustion engines. So they use oil lamps, horses and windmills for



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aids to civilization. The family we visited were impressively dignified. The imbeciles were admirable, well conducted and anxious to please, but they resembled mongols in no respect : even their chromosomes, I was told, were normal. I was glad to hear that there were unaffected brothers and sisters in the family. The burden of having the three defectives was thus mitigated for the parents ; as they are first cousins, a recessive defect seems ~~a~~ likely to be the cause of the trouble in their offspring. We said goodbye to our thoughtful host, Bill Mellman, and were driven to Victor McKusick's most elegant house in the best residential suburb of Baltimore.

The evening went by quickly. A grand party was provided in our honour. Some guests were ~~were~~ students who brought material for me to look at and give an opinion upon. Others were distinguished local worthies like Bentley Glass. Margaret also arranged for the Munsons, Jojo's sister and her husband, to be invited. The McKusicks certainly gave us fine hospitality.

9th February  
(Sunday)

Next morning early Victor drove us to the Hospital and then on to the Friendship Airport whence we had been booked to travel to Love Airport at Dallas, Texas. The flight was uneventful and it was followed by a second journey in what Bentley Glass had called a 'little' plane. It was crowded and I was rather cramped, seeing nothing except a bit of wing and propellor until we landed at Austin, where Roger eventually appeared in a cream-coloured Volkswagen. Everything seemed dried up, greyish brown with a little dark green, rather like Canada in the middle of summer after a drought. Roger introduced us to some very pleasant friends with whom we spent the afternoon <sup>we went for an exploratory walk</sup> accompanied by Jojo and Christopher. As the day went on more people arrived and in the evening a crescendo developed when we ~~all~~ proceeded to a party with all or almost all of the world's experts on gravitation, relativity and elementary particles present. I was not quite as intelligent as I should have been in order to take



full advantage of the possibilities of brilliant conversation presented but I enjoyed the food. I also examined a defective child of one of the relativists but could only make some suggestions for further investigations as I had no travelling laboratory with me and no proper instruments <sup>(e.g. no ophthalmoscope)</sup> to enable me to clinch the diagnosis.

10th February  
(Monday)

It's unbelievable that we had been just a week in the United States. It seemed like eternity in consequence of the variety of strange experiences. This was intended to be something of a rest day. Roger had to lecture in the morning but came back to his house and fetched the rest of us to lunch with the relativity gang. I listened to a lecture by one of them, an exported British scientist now at a university in California and visiting Austin, while Margaret and Jojo tried to do some shopping but were almost overcome by the heat. I subsequently discussed problems of editing journals on human genetics with Eldon Sutton, an efficient chemist turned biologist who now edits the American Journal <sup>(which parallels our "Annals")</sup>. He brought me back to Roger's house for supper, in a very grand car it seemed to me.

Christopher is very interested in books. He stands leaning against a low table, opens them carefully and flicks through the pages and then closes them gently : unusual in an infant of 12 months and suggests an academic future.

11th February  
(Tuesday)

Roger took us all to see the countryside on the west side of Austin - some rivers, dams and lakes and huge vistas of scrubby bushes and sandy soil with hardly any trees. We did not get as far as L.B.J.'s ranch but saw an advertisement for an exhibition of poisonous snakes and desert reptiles which was closed. In the afternoon I gave a lecture to the zoologists which was faithfully attended by Professor Stone, Fabergé, Roger, Margaret, Jojo, Roger's benefactor Alfred Schild, Professor Oliver and the fabulous Professor Painter. Eldon Sutton introduced me most charmingly by reading an extract from a letter sent by Michael White, the famous

cytologist, to Fabergé in 1947 describing my attempts to examine chromosomes of malformed infants which he then thought to be absurd. I described the resolution of the maternal age distribution in mongolism into two components which at least seemed to amuse Roger. Afterwards Fabergé, grandson of the man who made elaborately decorated clocks for the Czar, showed me some weird impressions of chromosomes obtained by using a special electron microscope he had constructed. We had a nice supper with Roger, Jojo and Christopher that evening again.

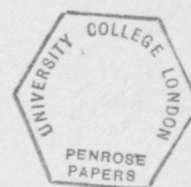
12th February  
(Wednesday)

I went with Roger in the morning to the University because he had to go and lecture that day and then explored the city on foot. At the Texas State Bank I attempted to change some English travellers' cheques but, although they were marked 'valid in any part of the world' they said Texas was different and had no foreign currency at all. I gradually worked up through the office staff until I reached a very high level employee who reacted favourably to a short eulogy on President Johnson and the dollars at last appeared.

The day before I had telephoned to Nashville, Tennessee, which we were supposed to visit next, and they had got all excited arranging lectures and conferences. Nicholas Hobbs, however, was out of action and I did not feel like giving any more talks. The plane connections were bad, involving starting early and waiting many hours in Dallas. So I had suggested taking a train for New York and Jojo immediately found ~~x~~ that there was a convenient one and booked the accommodation all in a few minutes by telephone. So off we went on the Missouri Pacific, a 'mighty fine railroad' the station master said.

13th February  
(Thursday)

In the morning we arrived at St Louis on the Mississippi and wandered around a bit to get an idea of the place. It was much the same as any other large American city. Then we boarded the train for New York via the Pennsylvania Railroad which passed through Columbus, Ohio, and Pittsburgh : a very comfortable journey.



14th February  
(Friday)

Back in New York we proceeded to the Rockefeller Institute where Alick Bearn had arranged the most perfect accommodation for us. We spent part of the morning in Wall Street borrowing Canadian money to buy tickets back to London for Sunday night. In the afternoon, while Margaret traded with the ~~B~~ B.O.A.C. and exhausted herself buying presents for Rebecca, I went to see Maier at the Rockefeller Foundation (quite different from the Institute). He bitterly described how the Americana Hotel had ruined their view of the Hudson River and invited us to supper on Saturday.

In the evening we dined with Edward L. Davison and wallowed in reminiscences of old times at Cambridge more than 40 years ago. His <sup>first</sup> wife, whom I had met 30 years ago, had died and <sup>he</sup> now is wed to an Alsatian musician and stage manager who works in high class productions in New York.

15th February  
(Saturday)

Alick showed me round his laboratories and I saw one of his cases of Wilson's disease. Then Jervis arrived and took us by car right up the Hudson through New Jersey woodlands to Letchworth Village at Thiells. We lunched with his family and then he took us to see his phenylketonuria clinic where he is treating some very early diagnosed cases with Lofen~~il~~ilac. They seemed to be going on fairly well but he mentioned to me an untreated boy whom he had examined and whose intelligence was normal. While waiting and afterwards we saw some of the hospital wards. The low grade cases are unavoidably neglected because of the extreme difficulty in obtaining <sup>nursing</sup> staff of adequate numbers or qualifications.

Jervis very kindly drove us through the most scenic route further out and then back to Maier's house on the other bank of the Hudson, quite near Yonkers. We ended up with a delightful evening <sup>the</sup> at Maier's house.



16th February  
(Sunday)

It snowed most of the night but, in spite of wretched weather, we determined at last to see something of New York itself. After a journey in the 'subway' we trudged through slush in the Central Park to the Spiral Guggenheim Gallery. Then we saw the French impressionist collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Next we entered the Manhattan Chess Club where Hans Kmoch, the secretary, gave me a chess journal for Jonathan. We were now becoming experts on the subway and were able to view briefly Greenwich Village, Chinatown (celebrating their New Year with continuous fireworks) and the United Nations' building, before taking a taxi back to the Rockefeller Institute.

We were met by the indefatigable Alick Bearn and his wife who took us in their car to Idlewild (now Kennedy) Airport. Here ~~MEKE~~ we were told we must wait 2 hours but that they would give Margaret and me supper but not our friends. And now occurred the most satisfactory episode of our trip. Alick disappeared strangely for a few minutes but returned with a tall grandly uniformed official who bowed low, congratulated me on my magnificent award and gave out four tickets for the best possible dinners and free drinks. I don't know what Alick had said but after that nothing was too good for us.

We took off at 10.0 p.m. and the lights of New York beneath were only visible for a few moments. We were to be over St John's, Newfoundland, just after midnight, American time. My diary gave the time of sunrise in London and Dublin so I calculated that it would come at 3.20 a.m. and I do not think that this estimate was more than one minute wrong. I found it fascinating at intervals before this to watch the rising of the constellation of Scorpio above the dark sea of clouds about 5 miles below (our altitude was given as 33,000 ft).

How they could have known where London, or even England, was to be found beneath the contorted but unbroken white and greyish mud, which daylight revealed down there, without radio and radar I hesitate to consider. The pilot said that there was rain or sleet in London but

nothing special and that was what we found when we got there but the clocks showed 9.40, not 4.40 which was the correct time by our watches. The Customs officer accepted my declaration that my suitcase contained a present mostly made of glass and did not ask to see it.