



YEAR OF DISCOVERY

Aboardship, Margaret settled down to enjoy herself. She had letters of introduction to people in England and felt she was off on an adventure, no matter how it had come about.

The first day out she started a diary.

The trip reminds me of the trip a year ago when we left from Boston for Glasgow. Dear Peggy how my love goes out to you—I could weep from loneliness for you—just to touch your soft chubby hands. But work is to be done dear—work to help, to make your path easier—and those who come after you.

She did not speak of missing Bill, Grant, or Stuart—only Peggy. She went on to justify her flight, using *Woman Rebel* rhetoric.

United States—what stupidity controls thy destiny—to drive from your shores those who can contribute to the happiness of its down-trodden people. Who can enlighten the ignorant—and help to raise the standards of knowledge.

The second day out she told of upsetting letters from home, received at Quebec, where the boat stopped as it steamed up the St. Lawrence River. We can only guess whom the letters were from.

* * *

The letters last night gave me a shock How innocently we can say one thing and mean it, yet for other ears to hear it or other eyes to see it than those it was intended for it has an entirely different meaning I presume that's why there are judges, juries etc to keep us ever cold and calculating in our ideas and in our thoughts I refuse to be so I love being swayed by emotions, by romances—yet ever returning to the ideal This is not what men have wanted in us They have wanted a post, not a living tree Let them

She went on to talk about her resentment of the Catholic Church and of domineering men, claiming they had joined together to crush all freedom of thought, speech, and action She was particularly bitter about men who wanted ignorant, servile wives whom they thought "charming and womanly" She would never be one of those!

Landing in Liverpool after a wet, cold voyage, she finds it cold and wet, too She is suddenly depressed as she settles into a dingy boardinghouse, but she must stay in Liverpool to await more letters from home

Soon however her mood changes She has visited the Clarion Café, a place where Bill Haywood told her she would find radicals like herself She has found one radical in particular, a Spanish anarchist, Lorenzo Portet, for whom she has "gone in a big way"

She has also applied for an American passport for "Bertha Watson," claiming her original one was lost This time she has given her birth-date as 1881, her profession as journalist, and Mrs A E Higgins (her unmarried sister Nan) as the person to be notified in case of death or accident A new passport has been issued her, though it is good for a short time only

By November 20 she is cheerfully writing her sister Mary

You will be surprised to hear that I am in England but here I am and all well & happy I am waiting to visit Edward Carpenter (an advocate of sexual freedom) before I go on to London I am trying to get the interest of the Neo-Malthusian League to help me in my fight against the post-office authorities, and if the war were not taking all the attention of the English people I certainly should be able to make an international case of it, & make

U S puritanical ideas a laughing stock for the world So if I do lose out in my case & am sent to the federal prison I shall have something to think of & have at least done something for the cause

In December she left Liverpool for London and took a room at 67 Torrington Square near the British Museum There she records an upsetting experience in her diary

A picture fell from the wall and the glass smashed into thousands of pieces—a voice that father had died was heard or rather not heard, but seemed to be an inner voice within myself Queer thing this—the first time it ever occurred to me and I am anxious to know what has happened

Her spirits rise after she attends a lecture on Nietzsche, “the most splendid and understandable rendering of Neitzsche I ever heard” They rise still further when she goes to tea at the home of Dr and Mrs C R Drysdale, the outstanding English champions of birth control, who “hugged me and took me to their hearts”

On December 13, she made two momentous notes in her diary The first was the receipt of an invitation through the Drysdales to meet Havelock Ellis, the man whose *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* had made him a world authority on the subject The second entry concerned her decision to leave Bill Sanger “Today I have cast the die I have written Bill a letter ending a relationship of over 12 years”

Clearly, Bill’s continued adoration was by now thoroughly boring As she had recently said, she wanted new sensations, new romances As for her children, they’d manage, somehow She was off on an adventure into a new world, and she was determined to be free to enjoy it Bill was in the way, he must go

When Bill received her letter telling him of a final break between them, he was not completely surprised In the few minutes he had seen her in Canada before she sailed, he had told her friends, he had felt “like a chilly intruder” When he got back to New York, he had taken a cheap place for himself on the top floor of a tenement at 103 East Fifteenth Street, the nearest thing to a studio he could find Alone again, he settled down to working as a draftsman by day and painting at night, his only break being his visit to his children on his way home

While Margaret's letter to him was on its way, he sent her a long impassioned letter in which he tried so hard to figure out what had happened to their marriage that in places it is almost incoherent

I can see you pale with cold, wan and fatigued Whatever the conflicting feeling there might be surging thru me now, I would want to be near you *now*—yes I do—to extend you that personal note in which I have found more joy than you have I don't want to disguise under the cover of bitterness that I could just fly to you now and serve you and administer to your every need and desire For you I lay down my brush any time if it meant that for your comfort it was necessary

The night I saw you first & gazed in those wide beautiful soulful eyes—I felt that soul-stir which was new to me—something just came in that by its very intensity gave me a feeling that I never felt before And when I left you that night—I felt I left one whom I knew before Your spirit filled me with the purest longing I ever experienced If I did not impress you so well the next day it was because I tried too hard to please you Why did I not assert those very things that we two are craving for now—individual expression? You wanted all the personal love that it was within my power to give you—how many times you remarked that my personal love for you waned when I painted! You were afraid of my art!

When we planned the house—well you wanted it And if I messed it up by building one beyond our means, I take all blame Love is blind I lived in a period of desire to please you When I finally designed that little palace I watched your every expression to see if you would understand You did You always understand That is why my cup of bitterness is so full now You have written to me in Paris that I should seek the women who might "enrich my life"—its veiled sarcasm did not move me to reply But if no other woman has come into my life it's because I feel your spirit so overwhelming in its beauty and its power I had no trial marriages or experiences to decide like you did when you did not "feel sure" of yourself I cannot weigh my life against yours Yours is changeable, adolescent, uncertain

When I work for wages I know that my services can be replaced by most any competent draughtsman, but when I paint I know no

one can do it just like I do it I become an artist and so do also with love

You say that my personality is over-bearing, just the opposite—I have submerged it all that I might serve you Few have taken me for my own sake, few like me, and you could well live without me—I know—bitter as it is You write me that you would not make a home for me had you known I meant a home in the sense that you would be a kitchen serf or be compelled to curtail one bit of your creative urge Now if you are a free woman this is as it should be

Do you remember the letter you wrote me last spring to Paris—when you asked me to release you physically and spiritually from my life? You will never know the utter despair when I read that letter You know the letter you received in reply in which I released you from every tie—and then you praised me to the skies for it That was last March That was, I knew, to live with R How I felt you will never know! Just when I was finishing the "Penseur" I needed the inspiration of your life But you admit now you were willing to live with R if you could make a home with him and the children They would in time be acclimated If I had popped off it would have simplified matters greatly! You said "If tomorrow I should care for R or any one else I shall do so" (and) I released you, Peg, did I not?

My Lord! Oh, that night when I wrote that letter I drenched that letter in my tears that I could not shed for the utter anguish & despair & yet I loved you! I wrote that I was willing to go on to further adapt my life with you & help you There was no reply to this

But to my surprise you again wrote me You must have experienced a change of heart & you recalled me in your life—yes you did I sent you the photo of the "Penseur" inscribed with that note on the back I sent it without a letter—I expected nothing—absolutely nothing—from you but perhaps that you received it I saw the crew gathered around it—I knew what they would think I did not care So came your letter which was a milestone in my life—yes it was It was the first real thing I ever experienced as regards my work Every fibre of my being just pulsated with new life & joy I felt I was made again Oh it was beautiful

You recalled me in your life—you said for the children's

sake You gave me the distinction few men can claim & coming from you it certainly meant something for you are a *good* judge of men, that I was "the hero of your dreams," that you were "glad that the father of your children was an idealist "

So when I came back (to New York) I rightly felt that the matter of R and you was a closed book & that is why I never questioned your financial transactions or relations with him until the outburst that night against me brought the matter to the front

Now I feel you are holding nothing out to me All is really lost

Now the time has come to revalue the narrow family relation, and its narrow personal love Perhaps you call it narrow, I don't I realize now that this personal love with you no longer suffices & you need the bigger love which will help you in your life's work You are to take that love from whomsoever offers it, you say Your personality belongs to the world So I realize that the bigger lover is the love that can give you the best of life and I take life to be in your case the help you need to (do) the utmost in the propagation of your creative urge Who can do that better than I? Who can give you spiritual, intellectual & economic help? This is the man you want to find I hold out to you the love which is as big and broad as the very scope of your life's work

Bill's letter ends here, either because the rest was lost or because he simply ran out of steam The situation had become hopeless anyway Margaret didn't answer him in any event, but made a short entry in her diary instead "It seems almost good to be alone—there is time to get acquainted with ones self, to reflect, to meditate, to dream There is so little time these days for memories it's a luxury to have time for anything but work "

Yet Margaret didn't stay alone long A few days later she received the eagerly awaited invitation from Havelock Ellis inviting her to tea on December 22 at his London flat

On December 22 she went to Brixton, a shabby section near the British Museum, climbed several flights of rickety stairs, and knocked timidly at the door Although she was about to meet the one man in the world she wanted to meet most, she was afraid he might be intellectually beyond her reach But as soon as he opened the door she felt better The man who stood before her looked so gentle she lost her fear He was also strikingly handsome, resembling, as she later said a "tall an-

gel " His white beard was long and full, his white hair fell in a thick, deep wave over his forehead, his nose was straight and fine, and his eyes were cornflower blue Her only disappointment came when he spoke, his voice was high and thin

She followed him into a small, sparsely furnished room overflowing with books Books were piled high on the wooden chairs Books covered the wooden table Books spilled from shelves onto the floor He motioned her to a comfortable stool in front of a fire, and while he prepared tea she looked about A fine Matisse and a glowing Pieter de Hooch above the mantel soon made her feel completely relaxed

Their conversation started haltingly since, as usual, Ellis was overcome with shyness But Margaret put him at ease so quickly that soon he was telling her about the trouble he had had after the publication of the first volume of his sex studies His publisher had been arrested and convicted of indecency, making Ellis resolve never again to publish his work in England, but rather, to find an American medical publisher for the remaining volumes

Margaret in turn spoke of her troubles with *The Woman Rebel* She filled in Ellis' sudden silences with stories of her nursing experience in the slums, telling him of Sadie Sachs' death and her resolve to do something to end this kind of tragedy Ellis was greatly interested in birth control, and soon he was describing methods she had not known before There was an old Hindu method, for instance, called Karezza With Karezza intercourse could be prolonged indefinitely, the man withheld his climax completely, and no ejaculation occurred Its supposed advantage for the man was that the withheld spermatic fluid was reabsorbed into his system, becoming a part of his elan vital or life-giving force, for the woman it increased the possibility of having several orgasms during the prolonged sex act "Ellis thinks the method splendid if the man is able to do it," Margaret noted later in her diary

He spoke openly and freely on the subject which was a great relief (He has) the shyness and reticence of the student, and the simplicity of a great soul and mind I count this a glorious day to have conversed with the one man who has done more than anyone in this Century toward giving women and men a clean and sane understanding of their sex lives and of all life

To Ellis, too, it was a glorious day, for the first time in his life he

found himself immediately at ease with a woman. Indeed, they spoke from afternoon until midnight.

Henry Havelock Ellis' shyness dated from early childhood. His father was a sea-captain who was often away from home on long voyages. An only son with four sisters, this left Havelock almost exclusively in female company, with a mother who adored and coddled him, calling him her "Handsome Harry." Also, he loved books and was bored by sports, so at school he was practically an outcast. He had become afraid of boys and retreated further into his family and himself.

When Havelock was around ten, his father decided to take him on a long voyage, hoping it might make more of a man of him. But Captain Ellis showed no favoritism. Havelock (who soon dropped the Henry) was made to sleep below deck with the crew like an ordinary seaman, and soon the rough sailors, attracted to the handsome boy, began not only to openly display their genitals before him, but to coax him into handling them. A typical Victorian boy, who knew nothing about sex, Havelock was at first fascinated, then repelled. He drew back further into his shell, returning home more bookish than ever.

When Havelock was sixteen, Captain Ellis decided to take him along on another voyage. But this time the ship was on its way to Calcutta, and the ship's doctor thought the extreme heat there would be bad for Havelock's delicate health, so he was dropped off in Australia where a friend of his father found him a job as a teacher.

He stayed in Australia for two years, but he was such a miserable disciplinarian that he had to switch teaching jobs frequently. One job was at Sparkes Creek, a tiny outpost, where he taught a handful of pupils in one room of a two-room schoolhouse and ate and slept in the other. Here he wrestled alone with the adolescent problems of religion, social acceptance, and sex. He decided he was not particularly likeable, since he could get none of his pupils to obey him. Perhaps, he thought, he should try his hand at medicine, though it would be difficult to get money for the necessary training.

Fortunately, when he returned home, an older woman-friend provided him with a small loan. With this help, he managed to stay at a university long enough to get a degree of Bachelor of Medicine, a lesser degree than that of Doctor of Medicine, but one that would let him practice to a limited extent. A single session in the London slums, mainly delivering babies, proved too much for him, however. He settled down to the secluded life of a writer, working at home and seldom

going out After editing a series of Restoration plays, he wrote *The Dance of Life* and *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, which eventually brought him notice

When Havelock was in his late twenties, books like these drew him to the attention of Olive Schreiner, the author of *The Story of an African Farm*, an extraordinary novel which was making her a London celebrity A staunch feminist, she nonetheless had to sign this book "Ralph Iron," because writing for publication was not considered modest in a Victorian woman Now over thirty, she had had a series of intense but disastrous love affairs that left her eagerly desiring marriage Having read Ellis' books, she started corresponding with him Soon she was inviting him to tea, because his letters led her to hope he would be the congenial, marriageable man she was looking for But when he arrived at her boardinghouse, she realized immediately that he was far too shy to meet her needs, he was so shy he was practically tongue-tied, and when she went upstairs to get her hat she cried from sheer despair

After some weeks, however, Ellis got up the courage to invite her to spend a weekend with him in the country, the weekend only confirmed her fears Ellis enjoyed kissing her and caressing her nude body, but he suffered from premature ejaculation, caressing a woman's genitals with his hand and mouth started and finished the sex act for him—all the more so when he was as strongly attracted to a woman as he was to Olive He offered marriage but she refused Yet because she so much enjoyed his companionship and fine mind, she became and remained his firm friend All his life, whenever he was in doubt, he would seek advice from Olive

Soon afterward, Ellis got up the courage to join a club of young people called "The Fellowship of the New Life," whose members were as out-of-step with Victorian society as he was They took long walks in the country in the days when only tradesmen or peasants walked, they thought for themselves when few young people did A member of this unorthodox group was Edith Lees, a small, lively woman of twenty-eight, who reminded him of Olive because she talked freely about sex though she had no personal experience of it She fell in love with him and was delighted when he asked her to go off to Cornwall with him for a few days Neither of them ever told exactly what happened there, but it was enough to convince her that she wanted to marry him, and she took the initiative by proposing at once He hesitated He was attracted

by her intelligence and vivacity, but he needed strict privacy for his work and had very little money besides. She promised to honor his privacy and to contribute half the household expenses. They drew up an agreement stating that, not only would each pay half their expenses, but any extra contribution would be considered as a loan to their joint fund. Edith claimed that this arrangement started right from the beginning, she paid for half of her wedding ring.

They set off for a honeymoon in Paris, where Edith was surprised and chagrined to find that Havelock did not attempt to have any kind of sexual relationship with her, not even the kind he had had with Olive. Yet, she too found him such a delightful companion that she decided to stay, even though it meant giving up the normal life and children she craved. Her liveliness and sociability so well complemented his shyness that the marriage, while hardly a conventional one, worked well for a while. As Ellis' biographer, Arthur Calder-Marshall wrote "He was her opium and she was his champagne."

As the years went by, however, Edith began to want more, she satisfied her sexual craving by taking on a series of woman lovers. Far from being upset by her lesbian liaisons, Havelock encouraged them. They assured him he would never be burdened with children he did not want, they also gave him case histories to describe in his studies of sexual inversion. He in turn gradually became involved with other women who admired him tremendously, took what little he had to offer sexually, and were grateful for that. There was one young girl in particular, the daughter of a friend whom he identified in his autobiography as "Amy," with whom he developed an intimate relationship that lasted for years. Acting on his principle of frankness he told Edith about Amy, explaining that she was mainly a "featherbed of a woman" who gave him the restfulness Edith couldn't provide. He also said that, because his relationship with Amy was only physical, it in no way interfered with his fuller and more spiritual relationship with Edith. To his surprise, Edith, who loved her husband in some ways like a child and called him "Havelock Boy," reacted violently to his revelation about Amy. She sarcastically spoke of her as Havelock's "femininity" and was so rude to her that Havelock let her visit him only when Edith was away with one of her own lovers.

Meanwhile, Ellis devoted himself more and more to his sex studies, trying to uncover truths that had been buried for so long under a mass of prudery. But he disclosed what he found in such delicate language,

calling homosexual relations, for instance, "beautiful anomalies," and switching to Latin when he wrote about the more explicit aspects of all sex, that he was not widely read. Only a few people bothered to wade through his seven volumes, though those who did revered him. The few who sought him out personally, like Margaret, spoke of him as "The King."

When Margaret came into his life, Ellis was fifty-seven and suffering from a crisis of confidence. Since the people who revered him for his sex studies were in the main without great public influence, and Edith persistently dismissed those studies as "unimportant" compared to his more philosophical books like *The New Spirit* and *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, he wasn't at all sure that his work had been, or ever would be, worthwhile. In addition, as he grew older, he grew even more afraid of meeting people, fearing that the secret of his sexual inadequacy would somehow be revealed. Moreover, his father had recently died, making him the head of a family with four unmarried sisters to support and little to support them on.

On top of all this, his marriage to Edith had also reached a crisis stage. Instead of remaining cheerfully vivacious, she was now swinging sharply from high to low in a way that today would be recognized as manic-depressive. When she was high she would dash off mediocre novels and plays, or rent unsuitable country places that she would attempt to sublet advertising them as "one outside privy, with four-room cottage attached." When she was low she would mourn her dead women lovers, sitting for hours in utter dejection beside their graves. At the moment she was earning some money through a hectic American lecture tour, speaking as Mrs. Havelock Ellis on some of her husband's theories of life and love. But the tour was not proving successful, her health was breaking down under the strain, and her letters were so gloomy that Ellis was almost considering suicide. His meeting with Margaret, twenty years younger than he and at the height of her beauty and charm, came precisely when he needed someone to bolster his ego.

Indeed, his attraction to Margaret was so strong that, as soon as she left after their first visit, he made a midnight entry in his diary: "Seldom have I found so congenial a companion, or found one so fast." Early the next morning he hurried out and bought her a single flower, taking it to her boardinghouse with instructions to send it up with her

breakfast tray If she hadn't been overjoyed the night before, she was now "That flower was *something*," she jotted in her diary

Soon Ellis followed his morning flower with a note His invitation to tea was addressed, "My dear Mrs Sanger," and signed, "Havelock Ellis" Now he addressed her as "Dear Rebel," and spoke of the "lovely evening which I owe to you," adding, "only it was too short, and I cannot believe that seven hours should pass so soon" He went on to arrange a meeting with her at the British Museum, signing himself merely "H E"

A few days later, Ellis was lamenting in another note that, although he had met her at the Museum and showed her how to apply for a special reader's card, he had looked for her again and missed her He had wanted to tell her about a book he thought she should read and also talked to her about her own *What Every Girl Should Know*, which he would like to see published in England "but possibly a little re-written here and there" He would keep looking for her at the Museum the next time he went, which would probably be the next day, as he kept to a regular schedule of going three times a week

So they began a series of morning meetings followed by long lunches at cheap Italian Soho restaurants, after which Margaret went back to the Museum, if only to keep warm

Her evenings were spent with Portet, the anarchist who had recently come to London and by now was almost surely her lover However, Portet was in a hurry to get back to his Paris publishing house and couldn't stay in London long, though he asked her to join him in Paris as soon as possible With two new exciting men in her life, she was elated Toward the end of the year she happily wondered "What will the new year bring? I am sure it will be things unheard of"