

**Letter to "My darling children" from Daddy [Arthur Murray Cooper], 27 Jan 1924 (CR4356/1/225).**

To see in the New Year, our first Document of the Month 2021 is a beautiful letter, written in 1923, from Arthur Murray Cooper to his children, Doreen, George and Joyce. Doreen would later become well known for her wartime diaries that she wrote to her husband, RAF pilot Gilbert Francis Moncreiff Wright, after he was shot down over France in 1940. Writing from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where he worked as a tea planter, Arthur Cooper begins the letter by sending thanks for his Christmas presents, a blotter and telephone book, before commenting on recent festivities "You seemed to have enjoyed yourselves at Christmas and New Year....in spite of chocolate & of the unwholesome food Joyce managed not to be ill!".

The letter then takes a loving and light-hearted turn as Arthur addresses Doreen and George individually, commenting on Doreen's "distinctly good" sketching skills before turning to his son George and declaring him an "impertinent scoundrel" for saying he got his bad writing from his father and bad spelling from his mother. He also calls George a "careless one" for losing his pocket money, which Arthur playfully warns he should stop giving him, remarking that "With nothing to lose you cannot lose much". He then goes on to detail activities in Ceylon, where he resides with his wife and youngest daughter, Zöe. Arthur recounts playing in tennis tournaments alongside the Baynham's and his pursuit of a large fish in a local pool, which he did not manage to catch, but used the anecdote as an opportunity to deliver a poignant message about ambition to start the New Year.

“Fishing wouldn’t be much good sport if it were easy to catch them. Most things that are difficult to do are worth doing and that which is hard of attainment is nearly always desirable. Let your ambition be to achieve something which you think to be beyond you. Even if your ambition is not fulfilled you will have lost nothing in the endeavour to attain it- so be it than the endeavours were well & truly made.”

CR4356/1/225a

Talawakelle

Ceylon

27<sup>th</sup> January -44

My darling children,

Mums has done most of the writing since she came out but I hope that she has sent my messages - In case she did not I now send thousands of thanks for your Christmas presents. They were very nice indeed - I am using Toby's blotter now - The telephone took away a good idea as so many messages come that ought to be taken down & very rarely is there - or even there I should say - pencil & paper hands. I am sorry I have lost her sketches as I should have known to have had them.

You seem to have enjoyed yourselves at Christmas and the New Year - It was pleasing to note that, in spite of chocolate & other unwholesome food, Joyce managed not to be ill!

I congratulate Doreen on her essay - Distinctly good. The sketch of Joyce was very good in part & you caught a recognisable likeness in both George & Toby.

George you are impertinent & roundabout - So - you inherit your bad writing

from Daddy, & your bad spelling from  
Mummy! Yes. Mr Fergie told me  
about that. I do write very badly.  
Mums spells rather badly but both  
these faults can easily be corrected when  
one is young if you take a little pain  
& trouble. So set about it please.

Thou coward one (George)  
a good plan will be to stop your pocket  
money altogether. With nothing to  
lose you cannot lose much. Not  
so bad as Uncle Gilbert tho' who got  
riched of £400 in a more absurd  
way. That another story.

Tennis Tournament last Friday &  
Saturday finishing on Sunday morning.  
Mums won the mixed with Mr Smith.  
He's a rabbit but Mums played well.  
Their handicap was +4/6. Top weights  
-30 & bottom +30.1 (Audrey Walker  
per Father). They beat Audrey & Co in  
the semi final. Mums was beaten  
by Mr Baynham in the singles -  
Mums - 15 Mr Baynham + 3/6.  
She & Mr Baynham were beaten in  
ladies double by a very good pair.  
19 of through 2 rounds of singles

from top weight (-30) including beats  
P.D.C. Walker who was -15 6/2, 6/2 -  
That was a good win as he's supposed to  
be good. Baynham beat me -30 +  
3/6 6/3, 4/6, 6/3. Rude of the  
Baynham family to beat us like that  
especially as they were stopping with us.  
They have a sweet child - Pamela  
aged 3. Zoe loved having her  
here.

Mums has not yet caught a fish this year.  
So far I have caught 4 to keep & put  
back 1. Got 2. My weights are  
2.6 & lbs. 1 3/4 lbs 1 1/4 lbs. Four  
very nice fish. There is a big one  
in the big pool opposite the Club -  
Yesterday evening I was determined to  
get it as others had heard of its existence.  
Went down early in the evening.  
Found D: Price already trying to  
it. Soon Mums & Zoe joined us -  
then later Daseon Maitland -  
In all five rods. The fish had  
a nice feed off other small fish  
and is still in the river untouched!



Fishing would not be such good sport if it were easy to catch them. Most things that are difficult to do are worth doing and that which is hard if attainment is nearly always desirable. Let your ambition be to achieve something which you think to be beyond you - Even if your ambition is not fulfilled you will have lost nothing in the endeavour to attain it - so be it that the endeavour were well & truly made.  
Enough mauling.

Time is passing splendidly - nearly the end of January - Early in May we hope to see you.

The sport Babe is still sport - is sometimes in need of correction - On the whole she is very good tho'.

I am thinking of entering for ~~the~~ three tennis tournaments in June if I am well enough. Breckenham, Gypsy Club & Queens Club - (to which I belong) - Shall not be able to play for many more years. Then I want to see the final at Wimbledon. Am writing Home trying to get a house or accommodation of some

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kind in Oban for August. I hope  
that that will suit your ladyship  
if it comes off. See fishing -  
boating - Steam excursion  
tennis & picnics - Weather  
permitting. I have not been there  
since the summer of 1892 - May  
be it has altered a little since then!  
If we fail there we shall have to try  
some-where else. We might make it  
five weeks but I want to get  
down South before the East Lothian  
tournament.

Have asked Uncle Gyp to try -  
fix up a house for us all for  
5 weeks - He to join us of course -  
He will let you know if he  
finds anything suitable -

No more time -

Much love to you all

Daddy