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Paul to Dario Jan. 8, 1945

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P to Dario  Jan. 8, 1945

Dear Dario,

I receive your large Christmas card and letter from England. Am glad to know you are safely on terra firma again. Danny is on his way to the Pacific the last I heard, in California I think,

We are in the midst of winter here now. Some what colder than the average I think. Several times this winter the temperature has touched zero or a little below. For tomorrow we are promised more zero cold. Tonight it is snowing quite steadily with two inches already here. The wind today was southwest, so I did not think there would be much snow, but one can't always predict.

Today there was fog and it began to freeze on the trees as frost, making wonderful gray tones. I was in town without the outfit, so could not paint. Am hoping the effect stays tomorrow as I want to get more sketches. Has been a long while since frost on the trees has been present—and it goes so quickly with the least warmth. The zero will preserve it no doubt but is a little cool for best outdoor painting. But I have stood it. I painted one winter day after day in snow storm with the temperature at noon in bright sun at minus 13 degrees. The feel of cold is much determined by the wind. There was no wind that day.

The rush of Christmas is about over and I feel relieved. The pictures for the last exhibit I sent Friday. This exhibit is the annual Hoosier at the Block Dept. Store in Indianapolis. Opens the 20th. I snet three of different sizes. The largest, a 30X36, is one of the river I made at Carlyle this fall which I think I have described to you, blue water foreground with warm reflections back. The middle size also was reflections. Year ago I made a 26X30 picture from a sketch of Hodggin's pond in Charleston. You know where it is I guess, just back of Metter's house on 4th Street. It is a rather dark picture, looking down into the water. When first made it was pretty much a failure, which I recognized some years later. The work I did on it was a "major operation" in color, and it is decidedly better. I will be interested to see what the jury decided about all three. The smallest, 20X24 is the flower picture, zinnias. It hasn't much to recommend it but
realism, and in that it is about my best. It is a bunch of the
zinnias in a blue vase, life size flowers, mostly orange ones,
some purple shades and one white. My friend, Morris, swears it
is my best in flowers. I like to paint flowers. I made several of
the zinnias. There were ???. made in one day mostly, did a little
next day before they had wilted too much. It is good training of
the mind and to know you have to do them in that time. It makes
one work as directly as possible. This is the first flower pictures
I ever sent to be judged by a jury. We will see what we see. Last
spring I made a 20X24 of the iris out of doors, purples and blues
front, sunlight back.

It is possible to have all three pictures accepted by the
jury—it has happened to me.

Well, I am rather glad I don’t have to prepare for another
exhibit soon. I can paint out doors now, or work at other things
indoors. I don’t like the hurry, hurry to get results by a certain
date.

You mentioned the old abbey, in ruins. No doubt England
has many such that are fine material for pictures.

When I was at the Art Institute, there was given for the
students a series of lectures each year—the Scommon lectures.
I heard them and remember two of the lecturers, one person
gave all for one year. One series was by Alfred East, the English
painter, I don’t remember anything now he said but a funny story.
No doubt he told how he painted, but I did not have sense enough
to take notes. Alfred East painted landscapes, many with sheep
and a herder under many effects of light, his main emphasis was
on the landscape, not the figures. The Art Inst. has several.
He had a very poetic feeling, but not weak-kneed feeling. He has
a book on landscape painting, a good book to have around. I
have read it. He says among other things to paint the foreground
with pure color outdoors, then when come in, if it is too strong,
tone it with gray.

One year the writer, F. Hopkinson Smith gave the lectures.
I remember more of what he said. He was quite a versatile man.
Started out as civil engineer. In the east somewhere is a
breakwater he built. Later he began to write for magazines and
books. “Tides of Barurgat” is one of his books, a novel. Still
later he began to draw and paint. The Art Inst. has a lot of his charcoal drawings, done in Paris and Venice and other places, street scenes. To get them he would hire a horse cab to drive to the spot; he would work inside while parked. They were fine drawings. He also did water colors. He made a drawing in charcoal, fixed it so it would not smudge, then painted the color so that street scenes, gondolas, etc. They were not first class as color pictures. My teacher, Wolcott, described them as black and while color “pictures.”

Both East and F. Hook, as we students called him, have been dead 20 years or so.

East went into a certain section of England to paint where there were fine trees. People who had visited the same sections could not find a single landscape he had copied “as is.” He took a tree here and there and made his pictures—yet he “painted the country.”

From what I have read of English weather “cold and wet” describes it. Yet it must be healthful, to nourish a sturdy race such as the English.

Somewhere in Wales I have some very distant relatives, and perhaps in other places there, as nearly all my ancestors came from there, Scotch-Irish, etc. My relatives in Wales are named Chenowith, my paternal grandmother’s maiden name. So says the Chenowith book of the family. The family name originated there in Wales. The front part of the name Chen means John; with, from Wythe, means river. He was the John who lived by the river to distinguish him from the other Johns roundabout.

You won’t have the time to do it, but one could spend some interesting days, months or years browsing around England. A prerequisite of such exploring would be to soak oneself to the saturation point with the history of the places; for I guess it needs no argument that to take anything away with us, we must take something to it. We need something to make us sensitive to the passage of time; to be able to imagine thousands and thousand who have passed that way, to remember that of all these myriads why a few ever came to the surface in history. Those are the few we have read about.
You say you have been doing some indoor sketching. I was glad to hear of it. Some way like that to train the hand and eye will help you to overcome the handicap of a war on hand. Make all the sketches you get a chance to do, and get your mind full of other impressions you do not get a chance to draw.

Art books are rather difficult to find for sale. I sent for two at Christmas but could get neither. They are not in stock very strangely, out of print, etc. I'll try again.

This has been my best year for sales of pictures. I would feel much happier about it if I did not know that the war brought about my temporary prosperity. Under better conditions of travel I could go on a somewhat extended painting trip—old Mexico, perhaps. But this is not time to travel, for more reasons than one. I suppose that when normal conditions come again I'll not have the spare money. That is normal for me I guess, as has been these many years.

The war is not getting over as fast as we were led to believe and hoped for. The counter blow of the Germans before Christmas looked bad for a while but is more cheerful now. I don't think military science is as complex as some would have us believe, but to my way of thinking, as a rank amateur, the Germans helped us out by expanding two sides of their line when before they only had one, and that in well prepared positions. After clearing them across France in many battles, we can certainly handle them now. In their thrust if they did not destroy too much valuable things of war, men and materials, they have lost because they certainly cannot hold their wedge intact for long. They (the Germans) may have gained some time, and impact the allied offensive, but later I think it will be seen that it was not worth the effort. Tonight's report says the neck has been reduced to 6 miles, so there is likely to be an army cut off from retreat. Of course, the Germans know war and know about what they can do. I think they will find that the allies are their masters this time.

I have been studying the war photographs. It is practically the same kind of weather there as here, perhaps sharper there as it is mountainous; cold and ????. Our boys of course have rubber footwear, as I have noticed in the pictures, and that is a great
help to have the feet warm and dry. In pictures of the Germans I have not seen any footwear other than leather, shoes or boot. I know from experience how very quickly snow water will penetrate any leather. So I don't see how the Germans can stand it. Their factories have been knocked out no doubt to the point where synthetic rubber is not made in sufficient quantities for footwear—tires are first.

It is past midnight so I think I better desist. Maybe add something tomorrow, or rather later today.

Two days later

The cold weather stays with us, although not quite so cold—not zero. Snow covers the ground. This winter resembles somewhat the old fashioned kind although I remember many winters of more snow.

I hope to do some outdoor painting in a few days. Just now I have the income tax to keep me from painting.

I haven't been out to the college for quite awhile so don't know what is or is not doing three. I'll be out there before long to get some books from the library. I can keep the books a whole semester which is a great help. If I ever get to a place called heaven (which is doubtful) I hope there will be plenty of books—and good painting.

So far this winter there is not painting class and I am not greatly yearning for any. I can keep very busy for some time just catching up in painting. A class is interesting in a way, helping someone else to do better work has its satisfactions, but at times it gets on one's nerves. It depends quite a bit on the students, making one allowance, of course, for one's own variability of temperament from day to day. One tries to repeat over and over the same instructions. When one has students who do not need so much repetition, the nerve tension is less. You will discover it one of these times when you teach—if you haven't already.

I think I better ring off and get after that income tax. Maybe you will get to stick around Old England for awhile and maybe not. Anyhow I hope you can steer clear of the foxholes.
My three grand nephews are in service now. They older one is in the Ferry Command, has been nearly everywhere; the middle one is in the combat infantry in Italy, a sergeant. Has been in one battle I know of. The younger one just left other day to report in California, also infantry. He qualified as a rifleman.

Things look better in the Philippines. A big battle soon there and the Japs will get another of their long needed lessons.

Sincerely and wishing you the best of luck/
Paul T.