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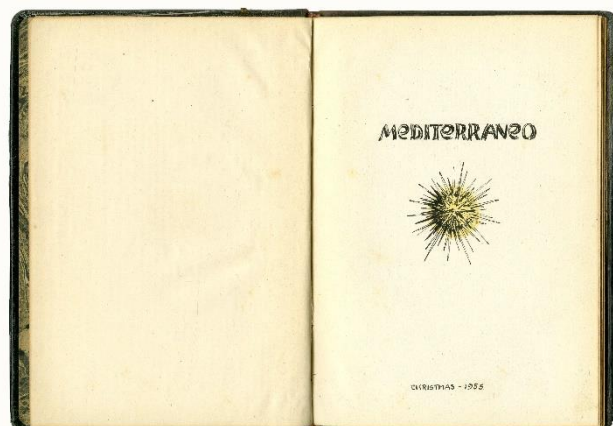
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MORTIMER, Chapman, pen name of CHAPMAN-MORTIMER, William Charles.
An archive of books, manuscripts and letters. C. 1935-50.

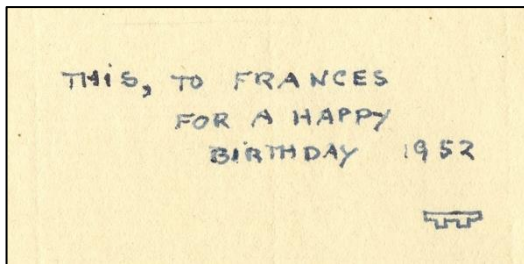
An archive comprising four bound manuscripts, an extensive series of letters from Mortimer to his first wife, Frances, seventeen printed copies of his books (8 duplicates, of which 2 variant bindings), and one copy of *The Mermaids* by Eva Boros, inscribed to Frances by the author. This archive is from the collection of Frances Rice who was formerly married to Chapman Mortimer (they married in 1934 and separated in the aftermath of the Second World War). £2800

The manuscripts, all of which are beautifully presented, are: a short story entitled *The Runner*, dated 'Barcelona 1952' and inscribed 'This, to Frances for a happy birthday 1952', 8vo, bound in red morocco (upper board detached), with two newspaper cuttings of reviews of Mortimer's *Young Men Waiting* loosely inserted; chapter one of *Mediterraneo*, dated Christmas 1953, with a pen and

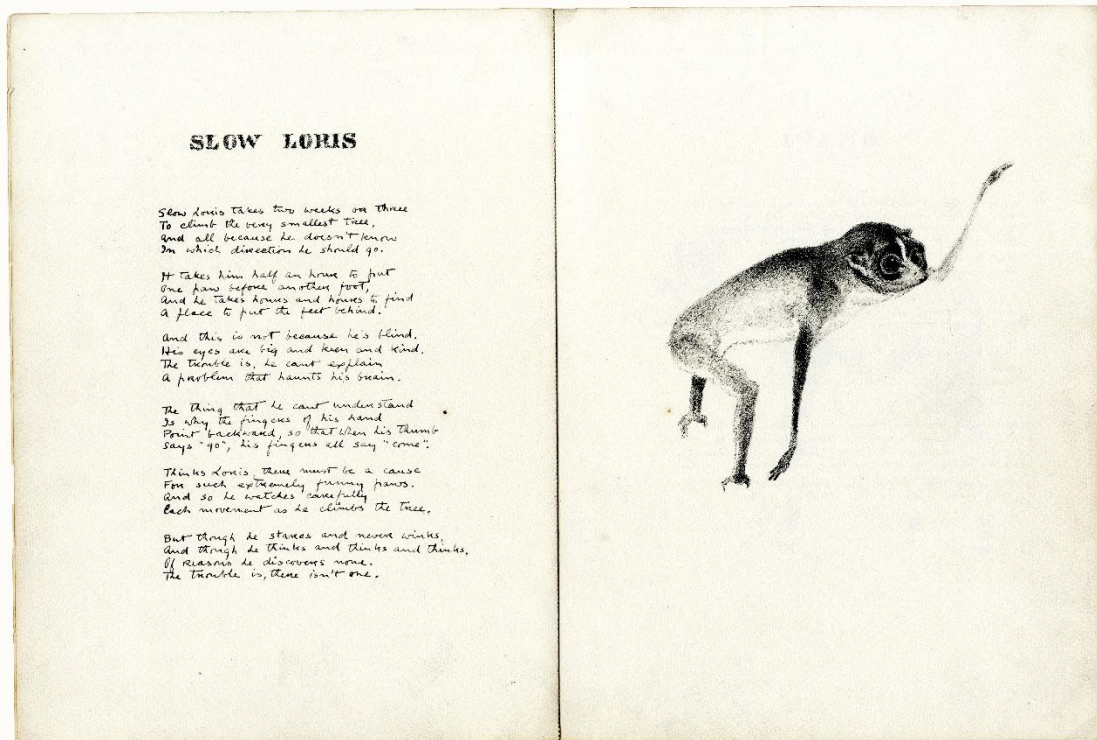


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ink and watercolour motif of the sun on the title page, small 8vo, bound in green morocco (a little worn); a fantastical dream-like story (appears incomplete) about Sir John Owl (a companion or perhaps alias of Mortimer in his wartime letters) and his squire Bluey and their drunken and imaginary adventures, illustrated with excellent pen and ink and watercolour pictures, with another pen and ink drawing loosely inserted, oblong 4to, bound in beige cloth (soiled and bumped) with a cord tie; a volume containing three poems, each about an exotic animal (the Slow Loris, the Okapi, and the Flying Phalanger) and illustrated with a full-page pen and ink drawing, 4to, bound in beige cloth (lightly soiled).



The letters in the collection are almost all wartime letters sent from Mortimer to Frances whilst serving with the Army between 1940 and 1945. There are generally daily letters for much of that period, including many from his posting in India. He writes of army life, his friends and colleagues, his surroundings and local customs, his writing and that of Frances, and family and friends at home. The letters are generally light-hearted, with amusing anecdotes, and tend not to dwell on his experience of the war beyond noting when he had moved or been joined by another regiment. He often addresses his letters to 'Del Bibi' or 'O'Bibi' (sometimes abbreviated to 'O.B.B.') and signs off with a drawing of an owl (referred to as 'Sir John Owl' in the letters) and a monogram resembling 'TT'. The letters are often illustrated with pen and ink illustrations, mostly of 'Sir John Owl' in various settings,

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some very quick sketches, others more finished drawings. A letter from on board ship in November 1943 describes his cabin mates: 'We have one creature who can't say anything without having a minor fit of hysterics ... We have a Yorkshire man who grumbles in tones of thunder all day and all night. We have a real wit, of the bus-conductor type, who says his youth was spent equally between boxing and wrestling booths and pool rooms. His patter, which is unending, is quite brilliant, and he has moreover a heart of gold ... They all treat me with a certain amount of deference, and "show off" like kids when I'm supposed to be listening.' An interesting series of copies of airgraphs from late 1943 and early 1944 describe his arrival in India and first impressions in great detail. Later, he discusses his experience of India: 'So much of everyday life is of an old old pattern, completely removed from the modern west ... The queer detachment of the world around one makes it feel as though we were the unreal, fictional part ... One thing I learned that helps to illustrate this feeling is that although it is true that a man who becomes a soldier gains in prestige thereby he has to get rid of his pollution when he goes home on leave before we can enter into his old life ... He has to take off all his clothes and wash himself from head to foot before he can move freely about his own home'. The letter continues with details of some of the Indian troops and includes a small sketch of a man in a turban with a remarkable beard.



Other letters include a small selection to Frances from friends or relatives in the USA during the War, and a series of postcards sent from Mortimer to his mother and 'Uncle Robert' from a trip to France in 1927. There is also a folder of later correspondence to Frances from other friends, including a series of typed letters relating to a burglary in which a number of items of jewellery were stolen. Among

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the letters from Mortimer are a few manuscript poems and stories (Mortimer often refers in his letters to working on stories). These include a short story for children set during the Blitz, a funny little illustrated story about grasshoppers titled 'A Work in Progress'. A famous tale not by James Joyce, a poem addressed to Mortimer's feet (which were complaining about their load), and a small, hand-sewn, typed booklet of poems 'written for the especial pleasure of Frances-My-Lover' with a watercolour illustration of a man and a hippopotamus on the front cover. There is also a coloured drawing headed 'John Owl KT and his bluey squire'. Final items of interest are two photographs (both c. 26 x 25cm) of Mortimer sitting outside under some trees in an elaborate rocking chair, in one case with a dog, in the other reading a newspaper.

A full list of the printed works is available on request.

