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(C.F.9).

23.4.45

Hello Angel, I thought I'd better get right down to this year's letter writing because there's an awful lot to write about and surprisingly enough, not so much time to do it in. These letters will probably take a lot longer to reach you so don't forget to let me know just how long. The Air letter was it numbered - tick tick - but it should have been No. 10. No mail from home yet - out - we're hoping to get some today.

At the moment I'm on the verandah of the bungalow, in the shade & practically in the middle - if you see any spots on these pages it'll be the sweat off my brow. Tim is on the other side of the table doing likewise. Rifer.

After we arrived in port we were anchored way offshore for a day & had to wait for a light to come

alongside to take us to the quay, so there was a whole day spent aboard watching the antics of the natives who swarmed out to the ship in small canoes. It was then I had my first disillusionment. I always had the idea the native boys were awfully clever + picked up pennies thrown into the water. These b/Sas didn't - they scorned the humble coin - you could throw a whole pocketful in the drink, (not that I did), + they'd take no notice of them at all. What they wanted was bottles! Any old bottle. Or any old tin can + suchlike gosh. Amazing they went - a bundle on those articles + all day they'd paddle around yelling their bloomin' heads off until their canoes were nearly awash with the weight. Very amusing.

We came ashore eventually + had another shock. That was the sight of a welcoming band of native pipers + drummers in the most fantastic regalia you ever did see. Very smart + very proud they looked marching + playing along the quayside, with

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half the Indian population gathered round either applauding or swearing - I couldn't tell which. Of course the Navy were there too but their welcome was a little more abrupt - no nonsense - ~~got~~ "git fell in" and many other remarks carefully calculated to help you to realise that the pleasure cruise was over & life was real. We were loaded into trucks & set off on a 15 mile journey that I shall remember all my life - with mixed feelings.

This was our first introduction to India & my immediate impression was that the life out here was not worth a pie, which is a 1/2th of an anna which is 1/64th of a rupee which is worth 1<sup>st</sup> 6d - not worth very much huh? The driver of our truck had a simple theory about driving, (he was a native), he merely put it into gear, put his foot on the clutch, kept it there & with one hand pressed permanently on the horn button went bell bent for the camp. I had the scare of my life. However it was,

possible to get some sort of fatalistic attitude to the business, and on those occasions we were able to watch the passing pageant. The part of the town that we drove through was mainly native, & I imagine, is a pretty good cross section of native quarters, bazaars, etc, of any Indian town. It's a fantastic sight - there's no beauty, glamour or picturesque qualities about these places - just dirt, squalor, poverty & people, but its variety is infinite. Every block, building & house (?) is

a shop, & above the shops are two or three stories of flats which teem with men, women & children (especially children), all hanging out of the windows, or over balconies, so it seemed that not one in a hundred did any sort of work at all. The trams are single-deckers with two cars coupled together - very much the same as an English tram, the big difference being that whereas in England there is a limit to the number of people carried, out here there is no limit. They

pack the insides, the platforms, the roofs, the rails & all around the outside. They hang on by their teeth & to each other - luckily the place is flat, but going over a bridge they just make it or if they don't a few of them are kicked off to lighten the load. It appears that natives only use 'em.

Further on the buildings scattered a bit & we supposed we had got on to outskirts. Evidently they're just developing this part for all along the road were gangs of natives digging & building. Women were in the majority in a lot of these gangs - the men loaded the baskets of dirt, two of them lifted them onto the heads of one woman, & she shuffled off with the load - you don't catch the males doing a lot in this country. All along the open road, too, were little clusters of hovels, presumably the homes of the gangs - out here they live with their work & if the work moves they just take up bed & go with it.

Along a ways & then we come to a funeral. The body - a woman, was laid on ~~the~~ a stretcher affair held on the shoulders of two men, & along with it came the relations' playing flutes & singing. Very jolly!

So far we had been travelling on a tar macadam road but soon we turned off onto what I suppose is called a secondary road but if you can imagine a farm track after a dry spell you'd get the idea. It was our first taste - literally of the brand of red dust they've got out here. I said didn't I, that our drive was a mad as well he didn't change his tactics just because the road was dusty & extremely rough. Oh is - isn't he. We eventually turned into the camp the dirtiest some - set of P.O.s that ever came foreign.

From now on we were to realise just what we'd let ourselves in for. On land it seems to be a different heat to that

1

experienced on board, & anyway, we didn't have our gear to cart about on board. If you can imagine (I'll be asking a lot from your imagination in the future, darling), a large expanse of dry, reddish ground, with a few trees here & there & a little grass - with longish binnions laid out in neat rows widely spaced & over & around it all a haze of shimmering heat & dust - if you can imagine that scene, you've got some idea of this camp. We came to a standstill in front of the regulating office, jumped out & in due course the preliminaries were over & we were allocated ~~out~~ our huts. But our gear was a helluva way from the huts & so were the buildings that housed the bedding, lamps, etc., that we were to collect. My god, how we sweated for those first few hours, & how dirty we got!!! We badly needed a shower & our next headache was

to find a shower.

I think I mentioned the washing arrangements in my airgraph (10). The showers have to await the pleasure of any kind official who turns them on. I believe they have official hours & all that for turning them on, but when I tried at first I managed to soap my body before the stream ceased - after that I had the pleasure of roaming around trying to find a tap with enough water to wash the soap off. I don't

bother with showers now - I just gather with the rest of the boys round the friendly little tap that never fails (except when they want to water the bounding green which to a pukha sahib is much more important than a sailor's dirty body) & there we splash & wash to our hearts' content. There, also we dhoti our clothes & speaking of dhotibaring, let me tell you of the dhoti-wallas, (walla-fellows), out here.



9

They first erect large concrete blocks & running water - by their side. The clothes are soaked soaped & then the fun begins. They grab your coat, shirt etc, in both hands & bang it with all their might on the blocks - they keep on doing that until either the cloth is clean or there ain't ~~no~~ no cloth left. I should imagine that if you get three dhobis out of a garment you're damned lucky. I certainly intend to do as much as I can myself. Wet clothes dry in an hour or more in this sun.

Our huts are very airy, cool & roomy & you can make 'em as comfortable as you like. We sleep under mosquito nets, altho' it seems that there aren't ~~many~~ many about these parts & it's not a malarial district - anyway, whilst on the ship we had to take Mepacrine tablets (I.C.I.'s answer to the loss of quinine)

in this camp they're not issued. There are plenty of minor insects about, but usually there's a lizard or two around to keep them under control - I haven't seen any snakes + it's true to say I don't want to see any.

We get four meals a day, but I'm not eating half as much as I did in England - I haven't got the appetite. For breakfast there are always eggs, done as you wish + throughout the day we get fruit, in salad or raw form, (a favourite salad is made up from water-melon + bananas + oranges), + lime juice - no rum. Generally speaking the cooking is fair, but the meat is sometimes uneatable. For sweets they're fond of dishing up fritters, pancakes or some pastry delicacy. Natives wait on the mess-tables + I'm getting to be quite a linguist on the food + drink side, (I've also been forced to learn sufficient to drive away obsequious merchants +

medicants (but that's another story which I will tell later). We have a canteen selling soft drinks, & beer once a week, there we can read the dailies ('The Times of India' is the favourite & is a contemporary of the English 'Times'), lounge about & play the piano.

Entertainment - organised - is it so hot but the blokes seem to have a fairly happy time with their own talent. I believe an ISMIA show comes in weekly, but I shall be out of here tomorrow & so it'll be the other camp that I'll be concerned about, & there again I think the boys will provide most of the entertainment themselves.

Woe is me! I've just come back from the Mail Office - no mail. "Tomorrow" is the eternal cry in India, I've soon found that out - I can only hope it's not the Tomorrow That Never Comes.

I suppose, honey, you'll want to know how my health is faring - 'course you will. When we came into camp one of the first things they did to us was to inoculate & vaccinate so the low feeling on me at present cannot be considered as my general state of health. I'm perfectly certain I can keep fit out here - the heat doesn't sap my energy, altho it's most uncomfortable, & you can depend on me to take every precaution the authorities advise. As I say, it's a non-malarial part of the country & in a camp of this description the sanitation is well studied. We don't come into contact with the natives so their conditions don't affect us in camp. In the town of course, it's up to the individual whether he mixes with the Indians or not - but the worst places are strictly out of bounds & from what I've seen of the joint I'd stick to the European side, thank you very much.

Yesterday, in spite of what I said  
 in one of my previous letters, I + a  
 crowd went into town. We were  
 tempted by the news of a swimming  
 pool - for Europeans only - which is  
 really the top, & as it was Sunday,  
 & as we were very hot it was just  
 the natural thing to do! The nearest  
 station - electric trains - is a couple  
 of miles from here over hill dale &  
 swamps & we all nearly flaked out  
 on the way. At the station we booked  
 2nd class, (the 3rd class is on a par with  
 a cattle truck & smells 10 times worse),  
 & waited on the platform & here we  
 discovered snag No. 1. It's fatal to  
 stand still. Within one minute around  
 me were 6 or more beggars, a fortune  
 teller, a vendor of knives, & below me  
 a boy of about 2 years was cleaning  
 my shoes. But by now I had the  
 king's pat - what you do is ~~to~~ yell  
 "Jao" (Go) very forcibly & with a  
 suitably fierce expression - that does

for everybody except the beggars & the little boy cleaning your shoes, & so you try another technique. You fling your arms about yelling "Nakheem" (no) & rush the barrier - that ~~is~~ usually effectively gets rid of the beggars, but not the little boy cleaning your shoes - as far as I know there's no tactics yet invented that'll get rid of him, so you just have to have your shoes cleaned & remember next time to keep on the move.

The train journey was very uninteresting - it ran through the most dreary countryside & villages until the main terminus is reached. The terminus is bigger than any London station & I think it's as well organised. 99% of the passengers are natives & I was surprised to see ~~so~~ <sup>so many</sup> of the lower types who can afford to travel - maybe I haven't got used to the standards out here, that's very likely.

Outside the station the scene is reminiscent of the scenes I've seen in the films of the Indian panorama - more like the real thing, if you know what I mean. We had been told to take a B. or C. bus to the pool from the station, but it wasn't as easy as all that. None of the conductors speaks English, & the name of the pool meant nothing to them, so that we had to wait for an Anglo-Indian to come along & explain for us. The bus, however, was the wrong one & we were landed in the middle of the town in a worse position. Eventually we got a taxi & from then on it was plain travelling. Taxis are cheap & plentiful & I shant play around with buses any more.

The pool is a lovely place - clear water, lawns, gardens, lounges, sun bathing enclosures, tea, drinks, meals - it knocks Danson Park into a locked hat. It was fairly

crowded with service people - being  
the week end - but it was very  
noticeable that there were so few women  
there - only about 20% I should say.  
Of course it was hot - I couldn't  
bear my bare feet on the stone - &  
the water was warm, so that it  
wouldn't be true to say that I was  
cooled by the swim, but there's  
plenty of shade anyway, I'm  
getting quite used to the sun now.  
We drank gallons of orange squash  
with ice (all drinks are served  
with ice), at 4 Annas a time -  
came out feeling fine. Across the  
way is a Chinese restaurant & in  
there you get the most-delicious  
food - English, Indian or Chinese -  
at the cheapest possible rates. Jim  
& I sat down to eggs (2), chips &  
tomatoe - bananas fritters - bread &  
butter - tea - all for 3 Rupees <sup>two</sup>.  
The others were yaffling steak, egg  
& chips with fruit salad &  
wondering if there was a catch in it.



17.

We came back to the station after that + had a walk round the native shopping arcades + ~~buzzards~~ bazaars. They sell pretty nearly everything you need + most things you don't need. I didn't buy anything - I shan't shop until I've had a couple of good paydays + then I'll buy in the European quarter. I shan't say anything about prices + qualities just yet - because I really don't know enough to judge - at first glance goods are cheaper but time will tell.

I shall have to stop now darling - it's getting dark + the only light is an oil lamp - not very good for the eyes. I'll write you a long letter amplifying anything I've said in the airgraphs as often as I can + you must tell me if you're being satisfied. There are thousands of things I want to say in these

letter + it just isn't possible to do  
it in one, two or a dozen - so if  
I've missed out anything you  
want to know, sweetheart, just  
wait patiently for the next. I  
shall need a whole letter to  
tell you what you mean to me -  
as it is, in this one, all I've  
got room for is a simple, but  
heartfelt

I love you

lls

9

Seabome.

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Sweetheart,

Let me tell you about the scene on deck tonight. It's so hot that altho' blackout is enforced they have, nevertheless, relaxed the regulations to allow us to parade the upper decks sunless but cool. Also, certain of us will sleep on the upper tonight. Right.

There's a quarter moon - upside down - stars by the million & a warmish breeze that's effectively cooling up forward but totally unfelt up aft where it's sheltered. Practically all the ships personnel are up top, & quite a lot are flaked out in various positions on the open space aft. There's little light, but what there is comes from the moon & its reflection on the sea - the ship speeds on. So here am I, just idly strolling about aft - listening to a crowd of Welshmen singing their national songs - they're terrific - nobody

talks or makes a noise; everybody lies  
~~has~~ back, relaxes + just listens. The  
singers seem to be over the sea some-  
where - you can't see them, they're in  
some corner somewhere - and they  
blend with the night so perfectly that  
you catch your breath. This is the  
sort of set-up that you see on the screen  
and deny because it doesn't seem  
true to life - it is, honey, it is. And  
you can feel the blokes all around  
saying to themselves - "this is good" -  
so it is good. It helps you to forget,  
+ that's good, very good.

But I'm on duty tonight so  
I have to come below + it's very very  
hot. As you come off the deck the  
air strikes you as if you were walking  
into an oven - I don't like it, not  
a teeny bit do I like it, but I'm  
duty bound to walk about in  
about three times the amount of  
clothes I normally carry.

LATER.

This, darling, will be the last

3

letter I shall write aboard this ship.  
We dock the day after tomorrow & the  
mail closes tomorrow.

I've no previous experience of  
troopships so I don't know whether to  
call this voyage good or not. I  
think, on the whole, I've enjoyed it &  
it's been a grand experience - I'll tell  
you all about it when I can - but  
the last few days it has been  
unbearable below decks, & from that  
point of view the ship - ill fitted.

I'm looking forward now to Hills.

Braganza & the visit that must be  
there - if it isn't I shall run amok.

From then on there'll be a period  
of settling down - just a few days -  
& after that all I have to do is  
wait for the call home. The interven-  
ing days & months will just go by  
in a dream as tho' I were beside  
you in sleep, with you yet not with  
you, and at the end of it all  
together again ready for the new day.

I'll try + send a cablegram to  
you, sweetheart, when I land because  
you might be anxious to know  
I've arrived safely.

And that's be about the  
lot from the good ship da-de-dar.  
Next time I write darling I hope  
to be in more cozy + comfortable  
surroundings. I hope I satisfied  
your thirst for news, loved one,  
+ I hope too you appreciate that  
what we are not repeat not  
allowed to mention would fill a book  
+ doe fill a Whackie Great-Bel  
of Regulations.

Wear a stout heart, baby, +  
I'll do the same, besides praying  
for you + our love.

Unlucky - read on sweetly.

~~Mr. Arthur J. Brown~~

9 & 11

ST. BART.

Mrs. Lisa Westaway

POST OFFICE

MARITIME

85A BELLE GROVE RD

WELLS

KENT,

ENGLAND

received  
1.5.85

FROM H.M. SHIP  
PASSED BY CENSOR  
RECEIVED DATE