

13

H.M.S. BRAGANZA.

Coastal Force.

~~24~~ 25.4.45.

Sweetheart,

This'll be the second part of the great Westaway saga "The Song of India" altho' it might appear at times that the song is becoming a dirge. These long ones are written at odd times during the day + night & the moods out here change with the hour. I feel less restricted in literary work now that I'm firmly settled & it may be that I'll let myself go in the future. I fear, my sweet, that, as in the past, verbosity will be more my strong point - even stronger than in the past - but I don't think you'll complain at that, will you sweet?

I had your No. 11 today dated 15/4 which is pretty good - Oh. One thing I must impress on you, angel, & that is, on no account must you feel that your boring me - or luvva ducks! I read every word of your letters about twice an hour. Things & thoughts that might appear to other people are certainly not so to

us, & you know full well that I want to hear everything about you just as you do about me. And not the least interesting part of your letters is the description of your dress - I like to have a picture in my mind of your latest rig - I think I've told you before, I dress you up differently every day & to do that I've got to have an up-to-date inventory of your wardrobe. By the way, sweetie, I've hunted all over for that list of sizes that you gave me before you left - I might have overlooked it in the mess I've got in my suitcase, but in case I've been daft enough to lose it perhaps you'd be an angel & send me another list. I haven't had a chance to examine the clothes situation out here & I'm not taking any notice of what the blokes out here tell me - I prefer to find out for myself - but the daily papers advertise things like wedgies & glamorous lingerie, ~~and~~ ~~stuff~~, like that, so maybe I can do something about it. We're allowed to duty free parcels a year which should be enough. However, pretty one, the financial situation ~~out here~~ with me is grim at the moment & will be for a month - next pay day 29/5! -

3

& daddy's got to go a bit slow.

I had a chuckle over the camera incident. As you say, too much - much too much - I aint that keen. My remarks about search for clothes applies, of course to cameras. I haven't the slightest idea of the position, altho' they're very keen on photography in India. I think, at first, you & I will have to rely on the lads who have already got me - we'll get some films, take some snaps, & get prints taken for us all. If you ever get a chance to get films, honey, grab 'em & send 'em along - 120 or 160. I think I can promise you some very interesting & amusing snaps - there's plenty of material. Also, the next time I go into Bombay I'll have 'me photo taken' - they finish & deliver in a couple of days.

I glad to hear you're getting good weather. I pine for some good ol' English weather - we all do! Actually it's not as hot in this camp as it was in the first one we stroude. There's much more vegetation around giving shade & very much less dust which I loved, in

the other place, to reflect back the heat & make it more intense. This is one of the hottest months of the year &, at present, the heat is on a par with an English heat wave - quite bearable & pleasant at times. At the back of our bungalow we can take out the camp beds & do a bit of sunbathing in the nude. Of course we haven't started work yet & I don't suppose for a minute that we'll have a great deal of time to sunbathe during the week. The sun goes down around 7.00 & if it cools off about an hour before that - we shan't finish work 'til 5.....!!!

There are 5 of us in each bungalow - with me are Jim & George & a couple of mutual pals. It's very roomy, but all comforts have to be provided by one's own efforts - camp beds & wardrobes are issued but no chairs, tables, benches or any other essentials to one's well-being, they have to be scrounged. In time we'll make the place a home-from-home but at present it looks a bit bare. Our first concern is to make the place secure against mosquitos, snakes, lizards & assorted insects - they come down in their thousands during the Monsoons which are due in June & last, on and off

'til Sept. At night, of course, we sleep under mosquito nets + it's quite a performance when you turn in at night. The net forms a square tent over the bed + the ends are tucked in under the mattress - you turn it down around dusk - which is the time of the day that the insects start flying - + when you get in at night before you get your head down it's essential to search the inside with a torch + kill off any stragglers that might be around. After that it's fairly safe - I've had no trouble yet, anyway, but - if you wake up in the night you can hear the blighters buzzing around outside searching for an opening - it's essential to keep the net in good condition. Outside there's a wash-house + the boys have rigged up a pretty good shower - there's plenty of water all day, a much better arrangement than the other place, but, of course, we haven't a golf club + bowling green next to this camp which must be kept watered - huh!

I have a shower when I get up in the morning + another in the cool of the evening - lovely. Outside, in the front of the

bungalows we contemplate digging a garden, as many of the others have, but this is the dry season & the ground is brick hard so, personally I don't intend to do a great deal in the way of digging.

I had a walk along the main road outside the camp this afternoon. It looks as tho' the Indian scene is very much the same wherever you go in this district - each 10 yards is a contrast to the other. Large American cars glide along a road on the borders of which are sacks & bamboo hovel housing people under the most appalling conditions. Each cluster I suppose, a small village in itself for where these people collect so there will always find shops & native vendors who appear to live - precariously, surely - on the needs of the families around them. The "shops" are merely sacks sheltered selling - - well, I'm damned if I know what they sell, unless the collection of filth & garbage represents their stock-in-trade. Further on there's a very neat, clean & well appointed Children's Home catering, I believe, for orphans. That place compares very favourably with any similar institution in England &

7
clearly illustrates what can be done. I
hesitate to speak & criticise on affairs out
here, because I've spent so little time in the
country, but my first impression is that
the natives are inherently lazy & do very
little for themselves. I'll have to find out
more before I can confirm that - it is a
fact, however, that their habits are filthy,
whatever standard you judge them by, & I
think they're unnecessarily filthy. The higher
castes live a much cleaner & more civilised
life - I realise that they've more money, but
I've also observed that a native fruit
vendor can pull a hundred rupees out of
his pocket & it's obvious that with all
these Europeans & whites around they can,
& do, make easy money - what they do
with it I can't find out, but they certainly
don't spend it on soap. I think they
find greater pleasure in chewing betel nut
which they spit out in a long red stream,
usually just as you're passing - ugh! In
the Indian papers much of the news concerns
Indian affairs - naturally so - & I get a
good idea of the trend of native thought.

Their main concern is India for the Indians & much has been made of Lord Wavell's visit to England which was evidently made with the object of getting something concrete out of the British Government on the question of Dominion status. Wavell is greatly liked by the Indians but his star may decline if he comes back with empty pockets as it appears likely he will do. What the Indians will do with their country when they do get their own way is not clear but it's obvious that without British & American capital they are doomed to fall back into the most horrible rut with consequent disaster to millions - therefore I believe that always there will be the maximum amount of "white" influence, and a good thing too.

This Sunday we hope to go by camp lorry to Juhu Beach - one of the glamorous bathing stations around here. I haven't been there yet, but I've told it terrific. I intend to have at least one swim a week & I might join the local polo team - it's a popular game

9

amongst the Services. I told you about the pool, didn't I? Break ~~the~~ Kandy is the name of that place + it's in Bombay - the poor quarter. It was erected in 1927 by the residents, & before the war it was fairly exclusive - now, they let me in.

The name of the terminus I was talking you about - Victoria! Shades of London!

Clothes are going to be a problem. The working rig is dhoti shorts + shirt which are not issued & have to be bought from a wog tailor - the quality is foul, just like sack cloth - they cost about £10 the set. To go ashore you need whites - long suits + jackets are not worn very much out here & the rig ashore is usually shorts + shirt. But they get so damned grubby after one wearing, or even just lying around the bungalow, & if there's no time to dhoti them yourself, the dhoti wallahs are given the job with the result the clothes are ruined in no time at all. I've bought a bush jacket - which is a long shirt affair, with four pockets worn over

the trousers - & long khaki drill slacks, &
that's the rig I wear in the camp at night.
Regulations say we must wear long trousers
& sleeves after dark to lessen the risk of
bites, but if we only had white suits to
wear our dhobi bill would be colossal.
I wish now I'd bought more whites in
England - cheaper & better.

I read that the black-out in
England has been lifted. That's fine. Of
course I know I'm 7,000 miles away,
(interior while I have a little soap to
myself, & a bit out of things, but I
should say that the war is over for you,
darling - the anxieties of war anyway.
What I'm waiting for now is the news that
you've managed to start our little grey
home in the West - have no fear, honey.
I'll wait very patiently - Rome & grey
homes are not built in a day, but
I do like to have something to look
forward to in the way of news from
you, & that'll be a headline. Don't
worry about worrying me, sweetheart,
with tales of difficulties, restrictions &

11
the rest of the bars to free living life
today. I want to hear everything and to
be able to discuss everything with you. If
I didn't hear about your troubles I
should imagine them anyway so you
might just as well come clean. Aint that
so sweetie-pie?

NEXT DAY

You can trust your old man to open
his big mouth about something he knows
nothing about. Yesterday I expounded at
some length on what I think of India
& the Indians. Today I started work in
the shops & with me on my particular
section are a couple of Indian ~~Marine~~
Navy P.O.s. They speak excellent English
& we had a long chat about this
country & its ways. I'm not saying
another word until I've heard & seen a
lot more than I have up to now. Harand,
one of the lads is a keen photographer
& he's been telling me that a camera is
easy to obtain if you know how - he
knows how & is going to try to get one
for me. The only trouble is, I have so
very little money with me to spare - do

you think I should ask you to send me
£10, darling? I promise not to spend it on
trash, & it'll be the last time I'll ask
for cash - after next month I shall be O.K.

I had a letter from Hux today
& it seems his knee has let him down
again - it's probable he'll go down a grade
or two. I shall have to desert you one
night, angel, & write to all the people
who've been writing to me, but I enjoy
doing it - it's practically the only thing
to do here at night. We knock off
two cats to go into Bombay for a
decent run ashore & so there's only week-
ends left. The canteen here is a very
poor show, without a piano & very few
drinks. We have a radio, but the only
English programme which can be tuned
in is General Forces & the reception is
terrible. So we read & write all night
& chatter about home. George has had
no mail at all since he landed &
he's feeling a bit depressed - poor chap.

After my first day's work I
think I can safely say I'm going to

13
have a very easy time of it for the rest of
the commission. My job is in no way
oneros, & I'm working with George &
those two Indian boys which all helps
to pass the time very pleasantly. When
we first came here we had the queer
idea that we were sent to teach the
Indians something, but the boot's on the
other foot. Most of those blokes have been
to University, have degrees & plenty of
money & generally speaking, are far better
off than any of us.

AND THE NEXT DAY

This weather is very variable - today
is cloudy & almost cool.

Last night, after turning in, I lay
awake & listened to the jackals howling.
You don't know what howling is until
you've heard these blighters & they really
put me in a blue mood. Having been out
here longer enough to have seen & heard
a few things I've had my impression -
concerning denstbling strengthened - I
don't believe I'll do a full commission out

love - but whatever time I'll do it'll be too long. There's nothing in India to compensate me for time spent away from you & it's no use me kidding myself otherwise. At times I get pretty low, & usually those times come along when I'm alone, say in bed. With the net over you it feels just as tho' you were encased in a box with no outside contact at all, secure against insects but too much isolationism.

Tonight there will be beer in the canteen - it comes in once a week & the ration is a pint! We've given a ticket which we hand in on buying the pint - I shall be rolling back to the cabin tonight alright - I don't think. We can get spirits in the Sergeant's Mess across the road but I haven't indulged so far - some of the liquor out here can knock you out for 24 hours which ain't so hot, is it? (You can tell the mental stage I've reached when I pull jokes like that).

This letter goes off tonight & with it goes all the love I'm capable of feeling for the World's Choicest. You are my all, dearest, - I'll love you for ever. *As.*

On Return Service
Mrs. Mrs. ~~Wentland~~ **MARITIME**
POST OFFICE **MAIL**

88 (A) Belle Grove Rd.

Welling
Kent
England.



(13)
received
H. 5445