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Far King Outpost No. 1.

12.5.45.

My Sweet One,

Jolly good - to get your letters, honey, including the one with £2. I think you could have sent it through Lloyd's but one way's as good as another. That other letter was a nice long one - very cheery too. I know now why there others of yours had that little something about Ken, hard to describe but definitely there - you were thinking of Edgar all the time, weren't you, darling, & it rather cramped your style. I've had a note from Doris & Blanche telling me all about the poor old chap, & it was certainly a shock to me - he was such a hearty bloke that it's hard to think of him on his back. Funny I should be telling you of the troubles some of the lads out here have been experiencing when this sort of thing should be happening to Edgar. It's good, very good, to hear that the worst

is over & that he's improving - I want to try to visualize my reaction to news of him going under - it hasn't happened & there's no point in dwelling on it - but maybe you can get some idea when I say that next ~~to~~ to you he's the only person in the world who has any genuine affection for.

So you know I'm here now, huh? Got a packet of mail huh? And you didn't worry about me going over, huh? Huh! Haven't you tell you we had some exciting moments before we got to Gils & your

old man was very concerned about his prospects of ever getting there. Just about the time we sailed there was a sub: scare that scared the pants off the skipper so much that he frightened the life out of us with continual loud-hailer announcements of what we could expect. To make it worse the weather was foul & our stomachs, already feeling queer because of that fool skipper, were subjected to a 'horrible ordeal' that pushed morale down a

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few more points. What with ~~that~~ having to turn in fully clothed with life belts at the ready a most uncomfortable time was had by all. Still, when we got to the rock the danger was past & the ship's company settled down to a pleasant trip.

I didn't tell you about Q, its did I? Couldn't very well, with all those restrictions put upon us - but I guess now it can be told. I haven't much to tell, mind you, just my impressions of a famous portion of the Empire. When you first spot it, after creeping up the Straits of Gibraltar, it looks just like a crouching lion. For about 20 miles approaching the place, land can be seen on both sides & as it's the first land to be seen after days at sea, we look at it with eagerness & interest. It's our first "foreign" land too, & we all imagine ourselves to be well-travelled travelless - hard-bitten sons & daughters of the sea. The funny part

of the story is the way all the other
services look upon our little draft as
being salt sea sailors, well versed in
marine lore & on all matters pertaining
to the sights to be seen along the route.
Of course we haven't let ourselves down,
& the years we spun! About 5 or 6 different
spots on that hilly, rocky coastline were
pointed out as Qib's & we had to pore
over a map at dinner time in order
to be able to give place names during
the afternoon. It was quite a relief
to leave the book & proceed along the
head where we could at least say
that we hadn't landed along there
without losing face - but who ever
heard of a naval man who hasn't been
to Qib? The sight of the place
didn't thrill me because it looks so
ordinary - it's just a lump of rock, &
from our distance there was ~~no~~ illusion
of height or majesty.

After Qib we ~~went~~ ^{went} through
placid waters with the North African
coastline in sight most of the time.

The Med. (handy abbreviation for an awkward word isn't it?), really is blue, intensely blue. But I'm damned if it's warm. I shivered for the first couple of days, especially in the early mornings on deck. Queer, because the skies were always blue & the sun shone - but the wind was keen & we wore out English gear to keep warm. We knew ~~then~~ why the natives wore thick blanket material - they knew a thing or two. We wondered why we had been issued with tropical kit; the thought of wearing shorts gave us goose pimples. All along the Med such a condition prevailed & we deplored it, we were getting sunburned in time to appear in India as though we'd been there years & not sprogs just joined.

We made Port Said in the early morning, & except for picking up the pilot we didn't stop. It was still cold at that hour - "Fanny," we said, "telling our folks that we had

to use 3 blankets at Port-Said to keep warm - they'll never believe us". And we were really choco about it. But gradually the sun came up & increased in intensity & from then on, as we sailed through the port & into the Canal, we began to learn that we were ~~now~~ in the hot belt. For the first time we were instructed to wear tropical rig - shorts & shirts - & my, didn't we feel embarrassed coming on deck looking like little boys at a Sunday School treat. Luckily the other Services were also similarly rigged & then couldn't say much, but ours were white whereas theirs were khaki & we felt conspicuous. The girls changed from slacks to skirts which made some of the boys blink at legs that changed their affections somewhat - they felt they'd been cheated. ~~All~~ All that day we lived the decks & watched the scenes on the banks - there wasn't really very much to see, just sand, altho' an ~~astounding~~ contrast is

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at the beginning of the Canal where on the Port bank is just sand & nothing else & on the other bank is luxuriant vegetation, with flowering gardens & lawns - I suppose that side is irrigated & the other is not. A road & railway run along the Starboard bank & there's plenty of traffic to wave at - everybody waved & shouted back, in fact it was extremely amusing to hear the myastee going back & forth when we passed an army camp. So we came to Suez (Port Tewfik) & the Red Sea.

The Red Sea is not red, but it's very hot. Plenty of sharks to be seen, & millions of flying fish which are awfully small - just like humming birds skimming the top of the water for about 30 seconds. That's literally all I can say about the Red Sea.

Port Aden & right across the Arabian Sea for Bombay & the end of the line. I repeat, a very pleasant journey.

Today is Saturday & normally we'd

have been ashore someplace, but as we went out on D night & spent a few chips, besides musing up our whites, we thought it'd be a good idea to stay in camp & clear up a few odd jobs like sewing on buttons. The sewing on of buttons is quite a gony out here. You see, the tailors in this camp, or any other camp, have the idea that whilst the article can be well made, if good cloth, etc., the buttons (especially the fly buttons), must not be fixed so that they stay on any longer than 10 days after leaving the tailor's shop. In this establishment there's hardly a garment that keeps together - buckles in this country nobody bothers very much if your trousers fall open or down & we're not inclined to worry about replacing buttons, but I feel slightly undone & so today I sat down to do a little mending. Apart from the fact that I've put on one more button than there are button-holes I've done alright.

This afternoon I went through

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the usual rigmarole of washing small
& working rig - plus a good clear out
of all the gear that I'm not likely to
need out here, (Blue suit, etc), which
included brushing & airing. We've
been told lurid stories of what
happens to everything during the rainy
season - due in a week or so - & from
what I can gather it's pretty grim.
Everything is permanently damp - your
clothes rot - & the atmosphere is ten
times as humid as now. I think
I'll take my blues down to a dry
cleaner in Bombay & leave them there
over the monsoons - altho' I've also
told that it's impossible to travel, in
which case I shall ask the Captain
if he'd mind if I went home.

Tonight I'm sitting in the deck-
chair on the porch outside the bungalow,
smoking a cigar & of course, concentrating
on you. When I write these letters, I have
a vision of you in front of me all the time
- you're figured against a background
of darkness patched with the lights

of the other rows of bungalows, just faintly, surrounded by a glow sufficiently bright to bring out your outline - what an outline. Tonight you seem to be a little under dressed, if you know what I mean baby, not exactly in the rain but somehow..... I'll have to have a good look. Hm - yes - quite - just as I thought. That's - pretty tight fitting dress you've got on there & out in the night it's colour blends with your skin - Oh yes, definitely provoking. Would you mind stepping into the light? Thank you. How I can really see you & my goodness aren't you a lovely girl - heh? A proper smasher too. When I've finished writing I'll ask you to come over & sit on my knee & we'll have a little kneading session - must keep my hand in. When am I going to get that photograph of the body beautiful? Mind you make it good and - well you know what I mean - something to keep the lad excited away from his beloved.

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Sunday: - This is evening, & this afternoon we ripped over to Juhu Beach - a favorite Sunday run. Came back, had a shower, changed to long trousers, had my supper, a row, with tot & cigar, & lay back in the old deck chair with pen & paper to try & do justice to some more Indian scenes.

Shall I tell you some more of these Indians? On the way to Juhu we pass through a few villages & the things I see on each of these jammers to Bombay are, to me, eye-openers. It is an amazing sight to see a spotlessly dressed native come out of a house that is indescribably filthy & wretched - I wonder I am still unable to fathom how it is that human beings can live under such conditions. Of course part of the answer is that very often they don't live, they often contract disease & die in their thousands - when an epidemic comes along these conditions make it very difficult for the health people to

combat it. These people have absolutely no idea of healthy sanitation & their food is prepared amongst the filth of the streets & alleys, yet, as I have observed, they are able, under these conditions, to present a very clean appearance when the occasion calls for it.

I've been making enquiries into the wages paid to various workers & I no longer wonder why the lower classes have to live in hovels. The average labourer is paid about $\frac{1}{2}$ R. per day, & the term "labourer" covers many types of workers - roadmen, semi-skilled draftsmen, mess-men, & servants generally. A man who is a skilled carpenter, or welder etc. may rise to $2\frac{1}{2}$ R per day but he's very lucky if he gets more. These people form the great majority of India's population, & there is a strong line of demarcation between them & the next class of people who have received a decent education, can speak English,

+ have a middle-class background. These classes are individualists - they branch out into businesses of their own & make a great deal. Singh tells me - & I believe him, that on one occasion he took advantage of the shortage of rivets to buy a small hand press & turn them out himself at such a profit that he made a 100,000 Rs. in 6 months. That is a typical deal for such people. They make fantastic profits & live in a grand way, buying two or three cars at a time & spending large sums on their children. Singh's class despise the coolies for their lack of initiative & education, but cannot suggest any solution to the problem of bettering their conditions. Above them all are the merchant princes who are giants in the industry & commerce of India - they are capitalists in a way that makes English business men look

like very small fry indeed. I do not mention the Rajahs because they are a story in themselves.

Class distinction in this country is on a scale unbelievable to a Westerner. I'm not considering the religious aspect - when I say that a coolie has a hell of a life due to the persecution of his countrymen who are in better circumstances. On top of that the various races of India are deadly enemies of each other - Singh is a Sikh from the Punjab & it is quite true to say that he would kill any man from Madras if he lost his temper with him. The Sikhs consider themselves the aristocrats of India - they were the Hindus who, long ago, fought & beat the Muhamudans from Persia & Iraq, so that they think that their race are the saviours of India - they attribute the conquest of India by the whites to the bickering between the other races & have never forgiven them for it.

I mentioned the Rajahs just now. I've heard some fantastic stories about them. I'm told that the Rajah of Nepal weighs himself every year against his own weight in gold - that part he keeps & the rest of the money he's made during the year he gives away to his people. The same Rajah has a Temple (I was told this by Singh in all seriousness & he invited me to go there & prove it for myself), in which there is a sacred stone which can turn any metal into pure gold! Another prince - I've forgotten his name - has a very deep well in the grounds of his palace which is full to the top with gold coins & jewels. The stories of the fabulous existence of these princes ~~go~~ go on and on & it's no wonder that the East is unfathomable. An Indian with the best education that money can buy is still so superstitious & old-fashioned that he believes in witches who can turn a man into a goat.

The Indians just now are very concerned over the future of their country - whether or not self-government is coming now or never. They are impatient with the delays in negotiating with the British Govt. & they think that they are inadequately represented at San Francisco. They are generally of the opinion that Gandhi is too old for the job of leading Indians into freedom, & many men are coming to the front with plans for a free India. It's very true to say that every educated Indian is alive to the problems that have to be solved before India can be considered a democratic country, ready to face the world as a land where every man & child has an equal chance & they realize that friction among themselves is the greatest obstacle. I said in a previous letter that I didn't think Indians could govern themselves properly - I still say that they

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Must have impartial members of
their Congress to judge without
rancor or religious intolerance, &
that means to my mind that
Britishers must continue to help &
advise for a long time to come.

I've Spouted a lot about
India, haven't I sweet? Let's
Spout about a subject nearer &
dearer to my heart - England, home,
& beauty. Are those pre-fabs being
rubbled up yet, or is it too soon to
talk about such matters? Boy!
am I anxious to hear what the
latest news is. Oh by the way - I've
made enquiries + it seems that it's
quite a straightforward job to send
carpets home + I intend to get
working in a week or two - I
told you, didn't I? that carpets
out here are very cheap + I can
get a super affair for about £3.
I need a custom's Export license +
the store will arrange shipment -

I believe that you'll need to get an
Import license to take it over in
England but there'll be no trouble
about that. I think I'll make all
arrangements this end & then I'll
await a letter from you telling me
of the sizes that we'd probably need
- will you suggest something, honey?

Also slings - I'm not sure what
you'd like. It'll ~~prob~~ probably take
two or three months to get them
across but what matter - unfortunately
we've got plenty of time round about
now & this way we'd save a lot
of cash over an essential article.

Apart from your next self, darling, the
first home-coming present you can
give me is the sight of a five-plate
of our own, & I don't care how
small it is - even if I bang my
napper on the ceiling as I walk in
I can still sit in a chair, (we've got
a chair, anyway) - besides it'd be you
that'll make it home not the ceiling

I could go on writing and writing tonight, especially about home, sweet, home. There's no 'sweet-sorrow' about parting from you, sweetheart, & I get really mad when I think of leaving all the work + worry to you whilst I stooge around in this place doing no good at all. I'm a damned lucky fellow to have a wife who knows her onions - if I may put it that way - but there are so many people who want you to select their onions for them that I realise you've got more than is right + proper for you to do. Still, before I left England young Claire was beginning to pick over the traces - the war's over in England now, baby, & other people can safely be left to their own devices except, of course, in cases of emergency, (Doris sang your praises over the affair of Edgar - it didn't surprise me - you're pure gold). But I didn't mean to start this page telling you what to

do honey - I'm perfectly contented to leave
our business in your hands - excuse
my presumptuousness & put it down
to circumstances; when one is 7000
miles away from the scene of operations
one is inclined to harp on the
subject a little more than one should.

I've had no English newspapers
out here yet, darling, & I'm a little
behind with those items of news that
matter most to me - demography & the
like. The Indian papers we have
concerned with Indian matters. Perhaps
you would include the highlights in
your letters, honey, & I'd be yours
truly. Of course, you'll keep to the
main point - I don't want to distract
you from that - how much you love
me & things like that - meat &
drink, sugar, meat & drink. I
might get out of line at times
but I always come back to the
main theme -

I love you

Ed

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received
at

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POST
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MELINDA

KENT

ENGLAND