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Bombay.

3/5/45.

Darling,

The first thought that comes to my mind when settin' down to write to you is that 'over there' the folks are a-settin' down to a Sunday dinner right at this hour and it occurs to me to ask if by any chance you could see your way clear to send me a real old English Sunday dinner - roast, veg, & duff. It's probably asking a little too much, but at the moment I couldn't think of any single thing I'd rather have by me - for a friddle second I'd even forgotten you, honey - here, I've said it. But enough of this frivolity, I must get down to business.

Income Tax :- They even find me in the darkest jungles of India! She had a form to fill in the usual one, but she returned it with the information that she already satisfied the Powers that be in the U. S. Now I'm not at all sure that that's the truth, altho' I thought that if I didn't fill in this form there wouldn't be any chance of paying twice & if I were wrong the matter could be settled later. Will you find out the exact position, sweets, & if I have to fill in a Navy form I shall need to know your earnings too. I'm sorry to have to put you to all this periodic trouble but it is a bit awkward being out here. Another snag occurs to me - supposing I'm being charged on my balance of civil pay only at the H. P. What at what rate are they charging me, and if the Income Tax people try to assess my \$150 earnings in the Navy will they treat that as being additional to my B. of C. P. or rate me at 6/- or 10/- or the rate may be, or will they treat it as a separate item, or will

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they take the trouble to take all my money into account & treat it as a lump sum. What I'm trying to get at is, there's a danger of me ~~possibly~~ being charged at the 10% rate twice over on certain sums. Do you think that, honey? I'm afraid I'm a hopeless defter at Income Tax, having had so little to do with it, & I would like to get it right.

Spectacles:- I wrote & explained what the specialist told me about my eyes, didn't I baby - well as the Service won't supply me with specs I think I ought to have my own with me. I know I'm a twerp for not bringing them out but that doesn't help me very much, & so perhaps you'd be a darling & send them out to me - I'm in no desperate hurry because I'm not suffering from the lack of 'em but you never know, long hours of reading & writing might not improve matters.

Well that's all the business I've got to discuss in this epic, my angel, & in the following lines I shall endeavour to inspire, enlighten, entertain & assure you in the best possible manner.

I'm enclosing one or two little views herein & perhaps I can bring them to life. This one of Cranford Market for instance. X marks the spot where we alighted from a taxi on the only occasion that we've been there, & I'm afraid that altho' the buildings behind are evidently intended to be the actual Market ~~resemblances~~, we didn't go in there at all. All our meanderings were done to the left of the view where there are numerous streets & alleyways choked with every kind of article. The market is out of bounds after dark for fairly obvious reasons, altho' I thought at the time that

the district was dirty enough to be avoided in any case - I've certainly no desire to go there again having been around a bit more & discovered that there are better shopping centres. These views too, give no idea of the condition of the areas, or the size of the crowds usually gathered there - all in all not a very good representation of the place but the only one I could get.

The next one is Victoria Terminus. I'm told on good authority, (Indian), that the architect who designed this building had his hands cut off afterwards so that he could never design another - his Swastika or it were. That may or may not be true - In India it's never wise to disbelieve the most unlikely tale - But the outside is certainly impressive, & the inside, the booking hall, a marvellous piece of Indian architecture. The platforms run out to the left of the view & along that part of the building the natives line up in their thousands waiting for trains to all parts of India. Immediately opposite is the equally impressive office of 'The Times of India'. Here again the view give no atmosphere. When you step out of the Terminus the scene is chaotic with crowds & traffic, & I'm damned if I know how they managed to get a shot without getting the emphysema of humanity - even at night the natives throng the place & sleep out on their mattresses. Actually we come out of the building at the rear - it's a typical example of utility being sacrificed to art because the only entrance to the station proper is at X which is a comparatively insignificant part of the building. The Booking Hall is under the dome & here again, the entrance is at the rear. But the Bombay people are inordinately proud of their station & it certainly is a sight worth seeing.

Remember me writing about the Gateway of India? Well here it is. The harbour is behind it, & in front is a large open space bordered by the large & old hotels of Bombay. The inscription on top tells that George V & the Queen landed at this spot in now there you have me because they've put the date in Roman figures & I can't understand them - I believe it 1911. We're not allowed to take snaps of the Gateway because of the shipping behind. Once again I marvel at the patience of a photographer who can wait years for the Gateway to be clear of crowds, or at his skill in wiping them out of the negative. If you face the sea & turn right along the promenade you come to the Taj Mahal Hotel which is THE hotel of Bombay, or of India so I'm told. I passed it in one of my walks around the town & it certainly personifies in its clientel the Pukka Sahib of the English colony. As I next passed the open verandahs, verandahs & entrance I could see people who were obviously out of this world - they seemed to resent any intrusion by outsiders into their den & it certainly is queer that the hotel area is clear of the crowds seen elsewhere. In this case the view is a truthful one - I don't believe the residents ever leave the precincts of the hotel except to go back to their plantations & factories to get a few more thousands of rupees out of the most miserable labour anywhere in the world.

I think that's about enough of Bombay for the time being, sweetheart. If you try & picture your little oosie-woosie trotting around these places don't forget to put sweat on his brow & a slight wrinkle in his noble nose.

What I'd like to do now is write a little about our future homes (I assume there'll be at least two - temporary & permanent). Without trying to be in any way maudlin, or sentimental, or pathetic, darling, I should like to tell you something of my feelings when I hear the other lads speaking of their homes. If they happen to speak about that sort of thing after I've had a tot I get an awful picture in my imagination of two little orphans of the storm, a Baker in the wood, with no home to go to & with nobody to love 'em - that's us. Don't it make you cry? But seriously sweet, I think young married couples who already have a home are very, very lucky people & I'd give anything to be able to think truthfully of you in England with a place that can be dubbed "Westaway Towers". How's things going? - a silly question because I know you'll give me all the guff as it comes along, & I know there's no particular panic but I'm all eager to get going. As soon as I hear that you've managed to get a place I'll flood you out with knick-knacks from India - little things to make the place look furnished, like carved boxes for cigarette, etc, ornaments, (I'll tread very warily there, darling), & maybe, tapestries. And I'll send home some cigars to stow away so that when I come back & relax in the old basket, (any chance, honey?), I ^{can} give the joint a little aroma. Of course, carpets will be sent, (but they wait if you don't get the first parcel), & if it's at all possible I'll send home some little piece of furniture - that have taken my eye, small tables, etc - very lucky & very inexpensive. All that & me too if I get any luck.

Speaking of luck, in all that, you, in company with practically every wife in the company, have written very

cheery news on demobbing, - the whole lot of you have said that groups are coming out at a definite rate & that 25 Group will be out by Xmas. I wonder darling, if you could confirm that. I've heard nothing, this end to make me disbelieve that, but the trouble is that with the lack of any news or information of an authoritative or non-ambiguous nature, & with the superfluity of a batch of wild rumours & idiotic articles, we in Bombay are completely in a fog as to the Government's real intentions. What I'd like is a categorical statement from some Authority which gives us the (an) once & for all & if you can tell me of it, or send it out, baby, we in Cheetah ii will be very grateful.

I think that'll be all for tonight, honey. I'm going down the road to the pictures tonight in one of the camps. It'll be a break because I didn't go into Bombay yesterday & I'm going to beach Candy today - I get so damned lazy these days that all that travelling is a bore to be avoided if possible - but I improved the sun-shining hours with much writing, reading, dhobi & the like & I suppose I've done more work in & around the cabin than if I'd gone ashore.

Remember me to you sweetheart & grab yourself a few of those space 'kisses' I left in the bottom drawer. Above all, remember

I love you
R

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9.6.45

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