

Bombay.

12/6/45.

Dearest,

The wind is blowing, but the snow ain't snowing, so it's quite a job to do the writing in a class A draught which has to be, on account of I didn't sit in a draught - Cuck of air would do for me. I had four letters today - 2 from you, one from Cousin Charley & one from Mike. Yours were a little out of sequence, the 5/6 came this morning & the 1/6 came tonight, altho' the latter was censored.

So you've got the first maps of me, huh? Glad you think the ageing torso is standing the test of years - of course the camera can be, y'know, & for all you know the 'tan' may be just plain Indian dirt - can't remember whether I washed before or after they were taken. I fear, my darling, that for a few weeks at least, I shall be out of the sun & a very good thing too - also, I shan't be able to go to Beach Candy for a while. I've told you that my weight has steadied at 134 1/2 so that you don't have to worry, baby, & it may be that my head will have reduced too - altho' I doubt that, I think I'm pretty good. The rationing, etc., have improved lately, as the result of some pretty hefty broadsides by 80 hungry sailors to the management, & I eat much better - as Vice-Pres. of the Mess it is, of course, my duty to assist in bringing about

these improvements & as they affect my stomach I can
 may be sure that I put my whole heart & soul
 into the complaining part of the business. We can
 go to the canteen & supplement our rations, but apart
 from the expense the principle's all wrong - as you
 remark were working for the Govt. under every
 trying conditions & the best - a grateful (?) country
 can do is feed us.

boise right too, about the confusion of
 doubling. As far as the Navy's concerned I'm perfectly
 certain that they are hedging for all they're worth -
 yesterday a Ministry of Labour representative sent
 out to give the birds out - east the guff on the
 matter, was in the camp next door & we were
 evidently expected to attend. But the lecture
 was in working hours so that our bosses would
 only allow half of us to go - I wasn't in that half,
 & when I disgustingly enquired today when the other
 half would have the opportunity to attend I would
 get no satisfaction whatsoever. I believe that I
 shall not get the chance to hear that man! From
 what I hear he was most interesting, & perhaps with
 a few questions from us he could have given us all
 the information possible, but it's quite clear that in
 this place, at least, there is no voice which will
 chip in for the boys & help them to satisfy their eager
 curiosity. I'm writing generally, of course, because
 I have no reason to alter my views on my own case.

In election matters, too, I only know what you tell me. We have been told that certain big politicians will speak on the radio on the 9.30 news - presumably that is B.S.T. If so, & if they relay it on short-wave, it will be received in India at 0200 hours!! a fine time for us. Newspapers reach us two months after they're posted - we can get no help that way. The Indian papers are not worth reading. I wanted to mention all this, sweets, not as a whine, (for I'm quite capable of finding out all I want to know in my own way), but to try & tell you & indirectly all the folks at home, that there's a certain amount of dissatisfaction & discontent among such as we because of the lack of information from home. We know nothing of how housing is progressing, labour problems, prospects of earlier times, or any of the many matters in which all Englishmen are interested. It's useless to tell us that we've got a radio set to listen to - yes, one set, & that's a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the road in a small recreation room holding less than a quarter of the complement. Very few of us feel like sitting there night after night trying to glean facts from an indifferent news service with indifferent reception. What we need are more lectures to which any man may go & an issue of papers ~~or~~ pamphlets on all topics, together with a better newspaper service. That, he said it.

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I repeat, my honey, that I'm right glad to read that you're getting around. I should mention that I did not ask the gang to see you were well looked after because I knew they'd see to it anyway, and I see I was right. You're quite a presentable person to take around, sweetheart, +, apart from friendship's sake, the Cads like to see you blossoming forth - you give the party an air, as it were - I know what I'm talking about. I'd have sure given a lot to have seen you in evening dress once again - if it was the same dress it's worn pretty well hasn't it? What's about buying yourself a new one? Or is it the old, old wigan problem rearing its ugly head. Well, never mind, when I come home, for our do in town you'll have to get something in the Sarraswood line, (just thought, the old tuxedo might fit me now), + I don't care if it costs us -- well -- a pound.

I also received the news uttering you sent. Sally's rather nice, isn't she? So's the girl under the shower. Oh, I nearly forgot, Mr. Molliam was writing on the other side, wasn't he. I read that article + I reserve my opinion. Capt. Bellinger was on the other side writing about describing, (again?), + I reserve my opinion about that too. I want to know more, but I will say I'm glad to see that a little muck is being stirred up about the Navy's position - people seemed to be far too

complacent about it for my liking + I think that's what the Powers wanted. Still, I've had my say, + I'll now leave it for a while. Speaking of newspapers, baby, you might not believe it, + if you do you might feel slightly disgusted, but I'd enjoy any, do enjoy, reading the Daily Mirror nowadays. It's English, + that's enough.

I note what you say about bags, seat, + stuff, + I'll be in those stores as soon as practicable making these sales people run around in circles. It's a bit different shopping out here, for me, anyway. In England the sales folk were English + knew me for what I am, just an inarticulate dope with no hope in the world of putting one of the Breed in their place, or of striking a bargain in the grand manner. But in Bombay, the people behind the counters are Indians with, say what they will, a sense of inferiority + I, a foreigner, can act as I please in the knowledge that any idiosyncrasies will be treated + accepted as foreign manners. That I can argue - I am expected to argue - I can boss through the whole store - I am expected to do so - I can walk away buying nothing - they might not expect that, but they're not surprised. I doubt if I can get 'Yardley's' stuff out here, darling, but I'll do the best I can. About the carpets - a lad who's sent some home tells

me that the only tax his wife had to pay was a 5^d per yard - export, five pence - import duty tax. He said that he understands purchase tax might be charged, but it depends on the bloke examining the parcel. Well there you are, baby, I tell you this so that you may be armed with knowledge. I read that the Chancellor of the Ex. will be taking some of the purchase tax off shortly - he'd better hurry up before he bankrupts us.

The air-mail from Chacky was short & sweet. He's in Germany, & hopes to go back to Canada by June. I wonder how the Canadian fare in the Japanese business - they're all volunteers but they volunteered for the European War & maybe they're not so keen to go back. Don't blame 'em.

The letter from Mike was interesting. He's still in America but expects to be shipped east. He tells me that Peggy's "Autobiography" is available in India! And he has broken with Blackwoods over it. I don't quite see the connection, but I suppose she loses money thereby. He's still writing & reviewing, & keeping bees. I must write him another letter.

The minutes of the last meeting having been read we'll proceed to current business. The rains have cleared for the last 36 hours in a surprising fashion - seems they've been confounding the experts all over S.E. Asia with

unprecedented antics. But tonight there's a gale blowing & we have another plague of insects so I guess it won't be long before the wetness arrives. We're better prepared this time. All yesterday afternoon we spent dragging immense baulks of timber from the bottom of the camp up to our block, & we've laid them at the back to form a path over the mud from the back door to the showers - (see picture). We fixed up mud-scrapers for boots, back & front of the bungalow, & we've fixed up wire netting in place of doors so that we can let air in but no insects or gales. We should be a little snugger this time. I've laid in a store of library books & managed to borrow a pile of periodicals - together with writing I'll be quite happy even if I'm rain-bound for a month. I've plenty to smoke, & plenty to drink. Incidentally, sweetly, I've got pounds & pounds of tobacco & the kiasi sell it duty free, so that you won't have to run around getting it for me this time - it's very cheap out here - I can get 50 cigars for \$10 & they're damned good too, I'm smoking one now. I wish I'd brought my type-writer out with me - I know you don't like typed letters, baby, but it would have helped with the rest of my correspondence & I believe I could have had a little success with literary work in the several service magazines printed here. But I can't write a long script. Keep the old machine

rolling, want you kiddy.

A general note on health. I'm still keeping perfectly fit, & the late drop in temperature has helped to clear away some of my spots. I've had a little prickly heat - an irritating rash - on my arms, but that's gone down now. I was afraid that the spots would grow into boils - many of the big fellows in our draft have had that trouble - but I believe continually dabbing them with T.C.P. kept the pus down - anyway there's no danger of that. My weight is still static at 13.1-11. Bowels in perfect order. All in all I'm doing O.K. & since I'm now pretty used to the climate & my system has had the chance to adjust itself, I think I'll land back in the U.K. intact.

All the boys are looking forward to a dance we're organising on July 6th in Bombay. It's a very rare occasion & the efforts put into making it a special do are terrific. We've hired a hall & band, arranged for running buffet & bar, got the license till 2 a.m., booked transport to & from the camp, & advertised extensively. It should be a success. I shall be a minor official there & if I can't wangle a free drink or two, & a dance with the Belle of the Ball, then I'm a poor official, minor or not. The girls in Bombay enjoy these service dances because they're less formal & more high-spirited than the usual British affair & we're expecting a record

attendance. I fear that the remarks I made about some of the ladies (?) at the canteen dance won't apply here - there will be no pukha sahibs & renegades on the door, just a couple of hairy-chested matches whose only criterion for entrance will be attractiveness and/or suitability for dating up - who can blame them? Nevertheless, I shall make it my duty to see that there's no lanky-panky in the hall - what happens after the ball is no concern of mine, & it wouldn't make much difference if it was. I shall gaze benignly on the lads & lassies enjoying themselves, & if I get just the teeny-weeniest bit reminiscent then that's your fault, or, putting it another way, if my gaze goes out of the window over the harbour & seas to dear old England it'll be because the pull of a certain young lady is strong enough to make me forget the hurly-burly of a dance, & force me to waft swiftly over the ether to her arms - & I shan't need much forcing at that.

Nightie night angel. Daddy loves you.

Es.

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