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Bombay
Sunday 24/6

Breathless,

I had a day out yesterday. I went into Bombay after lunch & spent the time in a most pleasant manner & very suitable for a Saturday - I stopped & went to the cinema. The rain was very spasmodic in the morning, & I thought then that the chance would be that the weather would continue showery, giving us an opportunity to get about without getting too wet. Geo. & Jim came with me, & a pal of Jim's - Dougy May - & we all considered the outing to be a very necessary one from a useful as well as a morale point of view, for we all needed stores & other stuff, & we all needed a break from the monotony of the camp.

As you know, a lorry takes us into town week-ends, (in the week it only takes us as far as Lion station where we have to disembark for a train into Bombay), & in this weather it covered, so that you couldn't possibly escape the rain - it comes in at one end of the canvas tunnel & drives through to the other end. However, the rain kept off, indeed, it kept off all day except when we were in the cinema, & we arrived in Bombay dry, but dirty - you can't have it both ways in India. On the way to town I was very interested in the ~~way~~ difference the monsoons have made to the countryside & the people. Of course all kinds of vegetation have sprung up, & the trees have sprouted leaf anew, so that the general scene is a vivid emerald green - amazingly wonderful. The cultivated fields of rice & corn are showing shoots, & the stream beds are

full of running water once again. You may think that nature has really started, after a period of slackness, to provide food & comfort for mind & body. But as I have said, you can't have it both ways in India, & if the people's food stocks may now look forward to replenishment, the people themselves may now look forward to a period of abject misery. In referring to the natives in their mean villages & palm huts strewn along the roads & paths leading to the big city. The ground is sodden, the roads water-logged, the rain penetrating & vicious - all kinds of livestock, seeking shelter, invade their hazy houses - they must be prepared from now until the end of the rainy season, to work hard under the most appalling conditions. Now is the time to tend the crops & they're soaked to the skin the whole day through. From those poor devil's point of view the future is very uncertain, although they don't know it, but, then, they never show any emotion, their faces remain cow-like under the stress of everyday conditions that no English labourer would tolerate for one second. But from my point of view the future months look very much more endurable than the hot, dry months behind me. To see the fresh, green trees & grass again reminds me so very much of home that yesterday's trip made me remark that I could easily imagine myself motoring through the Kent & Sussex roads to the coast, in fact I had no thought of India at all as I watched a passing scene too English for words.

We got to Bombay - Victoria Terminus - & stood waiting there awhile for Singh who had promised to meet us there at 3 pm. - he was bringing his Passer

girl friend along & as he didn't show up after all I guessed she had forced his hand in some other direction - She explained that larsee girls are very passionate, & you can hardly blame one if she objects to tramping round the streets with five men all day when there are other more delightful activities to be had - Singh has his own flat! So after a suitable interval of waiting we moved off down Hornby Rd, the happy-hunting ground of service men on the lookout for bargains (sic) in all sorts of merchandise.

We went first to the shop from which I sent our first food-parcel. I hadn't received the postal receipt for that parcel & I wanted to know why - they convinced me that it had been sent, however, & I expect to hear of its safe arrival in two or three weeks' time. Whilst in the shop I bought the first part of a second parcel - raisins, Sultanar tea (Chiplins, the time - the first was brook brand & you can bet we know our preference), and the old favourite, cigars, for storage & future use when your ever-loving husband is able. (It's suddenly struck me, baby, that the first parcel may have a little shock for you in the way of tax on the cigars therein - never mind, I shan't be caught again because all future consignments will be sent under a Duty Free label). Further down, we bought writing paper - for me - & hair clips, Pond's Vanishing Cream & Pond's Cleansing Cream - for you. I don't know the state of the market in England for these things, sweetly, but I do know it was grim before I left.

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However, you can tell me later + you can also tell me if I've got the right stuff, - they're only small jars, as a sort of sample, but I can get any amount you like. You'll probably be amused at getting Pandi's stuff, made at Benivali, Madras, via India!

At about 5 p.m. we went to Chung Hui's restaurant in Hornby Rd for big eats. After camp austerity we look forward with schoolboy eagerness to a really good blow-out + by this time we were hungry. But, on this occasion, I didn't have the usual steak, eggs, chips + tomatoe - the other reactionaries may raise their eyebrows, but I am not easily put out. This time I had crab & frying which is an immense omelette with crab & every thing else inside it. It's delicious. After that, ice cream - + so to the Eros cinema.

The Eros is a very modern joint - I have a photograph of it here. It's built on reclaimed land from the sea, as is practically the whole of modern Bombay. To the left ^{looking at} the cinema, across the road, is a large park, + the road on the right hand side leads down to the Marine Drive, also photographed herewith. Once again add a few hundred thousand people, + a few thousand cars, etc before attempting to visualise the scene.

The show started at 6.30 + we were there at 6, which meant sampling the luxurious settees + lounges, + watching the elite of Bombay parade. We were equipped with a small bottle of rum + a few cigars, + unequipped in a few minutes, with all our shopping

Which went into the cloakroom, (I had bought a canvas, waterproof, w/dull - very ready, the size of mine at home, for R4 As. 8). A warning bell rings 10 mins before the show is due to start & at that, we slid in our R1 As 2 seats in the stalls like lords, shepherded by an obsequious Indian attendant. The picture was as you're undoubtedly eager to know - Bing Crosby in "Here Comes the Waves" & in my opinion, it was as poor as haddock-water - silly story, & not enough musical - topical action - but we actually saw some women, white women, & from that angle, the picture was satisfactory enough.

When we came out of there, our day was nearly at an end. Back to the loopy, a run through a moonlit night to the camp & so to bed. Today it is, once more, raining rats & frogs & it's very unlikely that I shall move out of the cabin except for meals.

The logical thing to do, therefore, is write to my beloved, which I am doing, ain't I? - and the rain & the wind can do their worst. I'm saving in the course of my honey. Your letters keep coming fairly regularly - no complaints - & I had one this morning as if in reply to my request for a Sunday letter which I'm sure you haven't got yet & which only goes to prove that we don't need letters to speak our minds to one another. I bet you those pots of Ponds cream reach you on the very day you've run out of the stuff. I made a little noise when I felt the thickness of your recent letters but immediately chastised myself

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for my greediness, & Cates, indulged in a positive way of self-abasement when I opened them & discovered you were using thin paper. You'll forgive me, won't you darling.

Medals, eh. I ain't so sure I want medals. I refused the last Red Star, (you mean that, don't you, honey, & not the "Africa Star" which is what you wrote?), because I didn't consider I was morally entitled to it, & whilst I wouldn't refuse the others for the same reason, I might refuse them on the grounds that ~~the~~ ^{these} medals are given to satisfy demands for recognition of service in some ~~sort~~ theatre or other, & I want no such trinklet to remind me of services given in the common cause which in no way rank any higher in importance or usefulness than any other services ~~unlucky~~ (?) enough to not to get a medal. On the other hand I might accept them because it would save the trouble involved in refusing them (now, it can be told sort of thing — I had to see the Commander at Dover to explain why I had refused the 1943 Red Star, & it was only the loose wording of the A.F.O. that ~~got~~ got me out of the rattle) — I have ^{not} decided about that, but I certainly will not run after them. I'm sorry if folks back home expect me to come back heavy with medals — they might be disappointed, & I don't really care about that — yours is the only opinion I care about, darling, & if you want me to apply for the medals then that's good enough, I apply for 'em. It's not a question of being proud of my service — I guess I'm that alright — but I do like to see a little equality about it all.

Now it's a funny thing that you should ask whether we've done anything about softening up the cabin because we've just started painting the woodwork green & grey. We've done the cupboards, boxes, doors & windows & it all looks very nice. Jim said we'd be sorry to leave it, it's so much like home, but I think he was kidding. The trouble is we haven't put any carpets or rugs down, or any kind of loose hangings about the place, for fear of insects nesting, & so it's hard to get over the bare look of the deck & walls - but at least it's clean, (scrubbed right through with carbolic at least once a week), & that's better than dirty decorations. Anyway, you, you sweet little pin-up you, help to brighten up the place - that smile of yours just radiates around the whole joint, & we don't need any more decorations.

When you talk of memories, darling, I don't know what you mean when you say I can't have any "really feminine memories" of you - now you really have touched a chord there. But here, with nothing but memories to sustain me, just as you feel, sweet, I recall so many things about you that are as feminine as ever Venus knew how to be, that, as I've so often said, I get squiggles all over me. If, as is probable, you're thinking about clothes, I've made all allowances for that & I still say you're the most delectable piece of femininity that ever slipped in & out, of threadbare & laddered lingerie & stockings. When I get home you'll possibly have a better selection of the old glad rags to adorn the body beautiful but I always say it aint the wrapper on the box that makes the chocolate & underneath the wrapper, darling, you're perfect enough to make me wish for

no one else. Of course I'm not a blind misunderstanding
 dunce-head - I'm one of those lovers who wants to see
 his loved one adorned in the brightest & best, & think
 she looks all the better for it, & so it shall be one of those
 fine days. But when you talk of wonderful memories,
 angel, you've got nothing on me for quality and quantity
 & they'll do very nicely, thank you, until something better
 comes along.

What a sorry disappointment you had on Saturday
 night, honey. It shows you what a boon a phone would be
 under those circumstances. When you get the flat, darling,
 you must consider having a phone installed. So Tom's
 home - my, I would like to meet the old lad - long time
 no see. It must be one round of reunions week after
 week & all very pleasant too. How's the beer holding out?

I get your clippings regularly, baby, & very
 interesting, they are, too. For your peace of mind let me
 say here that nothing that I've read since has made me
 change my mind about my vote, even tho' a flood of
 papers & clippings came the day after I sent you the letter.
 Er - the Sunday Pictorial pictures are very much appreciated
 from an artistic view point, (aint artists human beings?),
 & it's considered, after careful perusal, that pinfish girls
 are just what they need to be - bless 'em. Of course, it
 isn't considered polite to discuss the respective merits of
 one's ~~wives~~ - oo! - wife from a physical standpoint (we have
 our code, "Fotheringay") & so, after looking at the A.T.S. out
 of uniform we all ~~lie~~ ^{lie} back quietly & think, & we aint
 thinking of tomorrow's work - I know I aint. We
 do not hang 'pin-up' girls on the walls - surprised? We don't

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think it looks very elegant to see bits of paper, inadequately fastened, flapping about making the place look untidy. Thus we do not join that gang of fans giving way to libidinous outbursts whenever their eyes roam the bespattered walls. Scintily, are we not? There is one thing you can do for me, baby — will you include the "Amateur Photographer" in the weekly bundle. I'd like to keep up with the latest in photography. I can't think of any other small article I need from home — I get all the English writer preparations out here — everything else in the Stationery, etc. line is in plentiful supply. ~~etc.~~ I'd rather look around for something for you, sweet — is there anything you need — creams, soaps, clips & whatnot? Say the word & they're yours. I can get you a fountain pen if you're broke. Plenty of stuff for sale, & I'd better buy stuff you need rather than what I think you need — so let me know, sweetheart.

And that's all from Bombay today — to be continued in our next. There is just one thing I'd like to mention before I stop — won't take long to write & it's awfully important

I love you
Les

On Active Service

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