

Bombay.  
1/7. SundayP  
Sweetheart,

Another month gone by - it's simply amazing the way time's flying, & I've got the impression of rushing like mad through this Indian commission in a manner that leaves me breathless. Maybe that's my reward for being a good boy - the gods are compassionate, & they're going to see that the whole horrible affair is over as quickly as possible.

I said didn't I, that I should be going into Bombay on Saturday, & so I did - so I did. We were all paid on Sat. morning, & as usual after reckoning previously how much back pay we were going to get, we all got ~~basely~~ barely sufficient to last the month on - that's how it is in the Navy, I believe they had arrears of income tax up their sleeve this time. Next Tuesday will see 75% of us trooping into Bombay to invade the pay office. Well anyway we were paid something & it was enough to allow us to go to town without the fear of the necessity to line up with the beggars calling "barkisheesh sahib". It was our intention that we should shop a little, eat a little - a lot, & finish up at the Metro with "Baking Beauties".

I'm afraid we've all gotten into a rut with our shopping. The intention was to roam round Cranford Market, but the lorry went in late, owing to Kate's payment, & we didn't consider there was time to spare. So we went down our old love - Horseby Rd. I took me little shopping bag & after a raspberry ice cream

In Chung Hua's place we made the old familiar rounds. By this time the snags & pitfalls of buying in Bombay have been spotted & overcome & altho' I say it myself, it's got to be a good - or bad - shopkeeper or street vendor to catch us for much - no normal man could avoid being caught for something. Harold bought a handbag, & in the same shop we were shown a 4 yard length of silk ("real silk, salik, with guaranteed fast colors"), in a sort of dark blue & gold paisley design - the price was R36 for the piece. I didn't buy it, but I've the idea that it was a worthwhile purchase - what do you think, honey? Once again the bloke pressed us to buy stockings & underwear sets, but ~~cor-huwa-acha~~ they're foul. Women in Bombay never wear stockings, & the best the shops have to offer are utility stockings made in England - the funny part is they seem to think we should be amazed & gratified at the opportunity to buy them at R7 a pair!

In the Great Western Stores we stayed for about an hour. Harold was buying stuff for a parcel home (while I think of it, baby, 1 lb of the last 2 lbs of tea that I sent you is for Muriel Fisher to even up the previous deal), George wanted cigars, & I wanted anything that caught my eye. To add to my Atalican night's existence I bought a bottle of nice S.A. African Brandy to go with my evening cigar, & I hope that this Arcadian combination will give me inspiration.

tonight, after supper, when I sit down to continue & finish this letter. This store is a well-known house for food & they've got stacks of stuff. That I must break into when I send your next parcel - I wish the authorities would relax that 5 lbs max. weight rule, there'd be no holding me.

By this time he'd jumped into Singh who was speaking to an acquaintance of his - a fellow who sells watches in the street. These street watch-sellers are the only sources of time-pieces in Bombay - in the main jewellers you have to be in a *rotta* for a helluva time before a legitimately bought watch comes along. When a *gusta* gets to Bombay, by some underhand means or other the street bloke buys up the lot & they sell them, at an appropriately high profit, to service men. It's the old, old bargaining game played so often by the Wily Oriental Gentleman - he knows how much he wants for the watch, so he puts the price up 100% & stands by for a barrage of price cutting. If the buyer wants the watch very urgently, & if the seller is prepared to pass up one bloke for a better customer than the doubled price is only reduced a little. But, as the guide book warns you, a satisfactory bargain is one bought at the price you're prepared to pay, & if you're happy about it it doesn't matter how much more or less, your neighbour paid for the same article. All very true. With Singh as our pal, the watch bloke would have been

prepared to reduce his profit to a mere 50% but he really didn't want a watch. And so to the Excelsior Restaurant for pineapple juice.

Coming out of the we inspected everything for show + sale along the road but apart from sundries we'd finished shopping for the day. What we wanted was food, big cats, & so tracks were made in the Bombay museum and for the Metro & a nearby restaurant. After chicken & omelette, we entered the foyer of the most palatial cinema in India & sat down in our R1 & 2 seats at 6:15 pm. & waited to be entertained for the next 2½ hours. I enjoyed seeing the film again, & I enjoyed watching the reactions of an Indian audience to the music & antics of modern America. Harry James left them cold - except the young Parsee element who appear to appreciate the hottest jazz - but Xavier Cugat's Spanish stuff tickled their fancy. They pass over the more subtle patter of the comedians, but a sketch such as Red Skelton giving an impression of a girl arising in the morning & preparing herself for the day simply convulsed 'em. They like facial contortions & they understand significant bodily movements - their native dances are of course, based on such actions. Me? - I make no bones about it - I liked Esther Williams in a swim suit, and come to think of it, the ladies of the chorus were next appendages too.

All day since we'd left the camp, we'd been lucky in dodging the rain, & when we came out of the Metro it had just stopped. So we were able to walk the 2 miles back to Lime Gate where the 10 pm. lorry is scheduled to

pick us up & take us back to camp. Unfortunately, there'd been a slip-up somewhere & it was 11 p.m. before the lorry arrived - we spent the weary hour chatting off the vendors who'd scented a crowd of Englishmen. They pestered us to distraction &, in sheer self defence, we had to buy a couple of pineapples, a bunch of bananas, & of all things, a toy whip. Back to camp, & so to bed.

And now, how about a few general notes on life in the camp - eh? Things are definitely improving. The beer allocation will be doubled next week, & will be doubled again in August - making 4 pints. New messes, heads, & rec. rooms are springing up all over the place & I hope that the present cramped conditions will be relieved to our liking. They've put on an extra cinema show in the camp - 2 a week now - but, unluckily, the damned projector broke down on Saturday & Lord knows when it'll be repaired. We've been allocated an electronic gramophone & amplifier, & a grant has been made for the purchase of records so that anyone can borrow it & give a musical evening. That's a mixed blessing, because so far, the younger element have monopolised it with the result that swing is king & sleep is out of the question. I understand that a batch of mixed musical instruments are for loan & maybe they can make up a guitar for me. Most of these 'improvements' are rather negative for the moment, but I have great hopes. I think it's fair to say that the improvement in our amenities is due, to a large extent to the efforts of the men, & I trust that the next time a politician sets up a sports about the

grand life the Cad's out East are having, he prefaces his speech with "Owing to great pressure from the Forces we have been forced — etc" because that would be the true explanation of how things get done.

I continue to wear very nicely, thank you darling, & I've cultivated a serenity of mind which helps to keep thoughts in their proper perspective. If, at any time, you read depression or blueness in my letters, baby, put that down to circumstances prevailing at the time, & remember that I'm full of love for you & great hopes for the future which occupies my mind for 23 hours of the day - the other hour I might have to give to consideration of the seamier side of this life, & if a little dripping creeps into my writing, sweetheart, it's because an unsympathetic outside world has come down upon me & forced my hand.

I'm anticipating hearing, in a week or two, that the carpets have reached you. No sign of a flat or pre-fab yet - I suppose, honey? Forgive my impatience, won't you, sweet. But - I guess you realise how much I long for news of our home-planning - tell me what you buy, I don't care if it's a frying pan, I'd just like to hear everything about it. Lonely bird, ain't I? But don't you go getting the idea that all I want to do is sit in front of the fire every evening in the weeks & not budget. No man, you & I are going to appreciate that little fireside corner when we return from the show, or dance, or gathering of the clan. When we've thrown off ~~the~~ our outdoor seat, & I've put the car away, you & I are

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Going to muddle down in the Berkeley for a quiet hour  
or two & get acquainted. With a cup of Ovaltine  
by our side we're going to have our nightly recuperation  
of that "first fine careless rapture" & after that we're  
going to bed & start all over again - unless we're too  
tired of course. All that & utility furniture too.

Nightly - night, honey lamb. I do love you so

*[Signature]*

Dr. Arise Service

POST OFFICE

MARITIME

88(a) Rolle D'roue Rd

Walling

Kent-

England.

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Received  
9.7.1980