

58.

Bombay.

19.8.45.

Dearest,

I should first of all explain about mail from both ends. I read in the papers yesterday that a plain plane had crashed between Bombay & Karachi carrying U.K. mail aboard. Some of it was recovered, but if you find you're missing one or two you'll know where they've gone, & if you'll let me have the numbers I'll ask my secretary to retype them. Next I should explain that I've had no mail from you since last Monday, & so, honey, if I don't refer to any matters you might have raised since then you'll understand why. There's been an improvement in the weather in the last few days & maybe something'll come through today or tomorrow.

In spite of all intentions to the contrary I went ashore to Bombay yesterday, & I'm glad I did. In the morning, in the workshop, Jim & I were moaning & saying how empty the weekend looked, & we decided in a flash that the best thing to do was to nip into town & see a show. We weren't going to spend too

much, there was nothing to buy just yet, + it was to be a cheap, ~~great~~ quiet run ashore. So we put on our whitest whites + caught the 2 p.m. lorry.

Of course, the sun having lulled us into a sense of idleness we didn't take our raincoats, + naturally, as soon as we were well away from the camp it turned down. When the rain comes the wind comes with it, + the water sweeps through the lorry horizontally. We got wet. When the lorry arrived outside the Regal, our dropping-off point, it was so bad that we had to stay inside + take advantage of ~~the~~ the nearest shelter of the awning - the drainage system of Bombay can't cope with a heavy downpour, + in 5 minutes the roads are inches deep. Still, the rain did eventually stop + we ripped out, booked seats at the Regal, + stood around deciding how we could spend three hours before the show.

Somebody mentioned carpets, + I pricked up my ears. As I've said, I had no intention of spending a great deal + I only had about R250 on me. The carpet I wanted to buy would cost anything up to R300 - it wouldn't be done, so, anyway, I had to go to the

Customs for an Export Permit, & it looked like rain, & -oh, it wouldn't be done, I said as much to Jim & another friend of ours who was coming to the Regal with us - they knew I wanted a carpet & we stood discussing it. They both offered to lend me a \$200 each, but I said what about the Permit, & they said well anyway we could go round to the Bohannon Palace, it's quite neat, & it'll take a half an hour away just browsing round. So I said O.K. we'll go.

The Johnny in the shop recognized me from the previous purchase & he enquired about them, & I said my wife thinks they're O.K., & he said good-oh & what's about buying some more. So I said well that's alright, & I do want some more but I've heard that the Customs have tightened up on things & what with permits & what-not do not a deal you can do just like that. So this Johnny says Posh-posh, this is India & what you can do in India is nobody's business & anyway what's the harm in just looking at a few carpets, picking one out, & we'll see what we can do.

When I heard that, I realized that the  
stony path of restrictions was to be smoothed  
over. I knew I was sunk & committed,  
& I'd never leave the shop without the  
bargain being struck. I gathered a  
couple of \$100 notes & sat down to  
view. My first problem was size. I  
wanted a large one & the Johnny said  
the standard sizes were  $9 \times 9$  &  $12 \times 9$   
& a few at  $10 \times 10$ . I had a look at  
the  $12 \times 9$  & they looked so enormous  
that I rejected them. It did seem to  
me that a  $9 \times 9$  was the only practical  
size to buy, for that looked big enough  
& I know that in a room you have some  
girth flooring showing bare. In any  
case I didn't know what the size of  
out rooms would be & it was better to  
be on the safe side & size. The next  
problem was colour & design & there I  
came up against my old trouble of not  
being able to make up my mind. He  
showed me a couple of dozen different  
colours, but the design was fundamentally  
the same in all. Evidently, out here they  
don't make a carpet with a design all  
over like a Persian rug - they put a  
thick border of an allied colour round  
a plain centre & weave in a whirl or

two in opposite corners. Well anyway, I finally decided - I chose one with a beige or fawn centre, a thick dark brown border, & a large design with a little blue in it in 2 opposite corners. It's 9' x 9', & I think having a square is an advantage because it can be turned round to even the wear. The cost was R225, plus R30 freightage, plus R20 for insurance - a goodly sum but I think it's worth it. The pile is a little more coarse than those I sent first because I imagine it'll go in a living room & will stand wear better. You told that, normally, it takes 3 months to arrive, but as the shipping position is getting better it might take less time - I hope it does. One point struck me, baby; if at any time during the next 3 months you get out flat & your mother moves away from 88 (A), either you could make arrangements with the next tenants to hold the carpet when it arrives, or you could find out the name of the cartage people in England & you can instruct them to forward it elsewhere. The problem

might not arise, & in any case, I might  
be home before it arrives, but we'd better  
keep the point in mind.

I came away from the Bolkara  
Palace feeling very broke but very  
pleased with myself. I've promised  
myself that when the Lloyd's cheque  
comes through I shall go back &  
order a search-suit to match, & with  
it I might send me for Davis - that  
depends on how much I've got left, &  
how tight this one per month restriction  
is. After that, sweet, you can tell me  
how many more we need to complete  
a house & I'll spend the rest of my  
time & money out here arranging  
accordingly. I love spending money,  
don't you?

Although I came out feeling as  
though I'd spent all day amongst  
carpets, actually we were only in there  
a half an hour & there was time to  
roam the streets for a while. No more  
spending tho! I was already R200  
in debt which just goes to show how  
easy it is to get rid of your money in  
Bombay - & somebody else's money, too.  
But the rain started again & feeling

the need, we wandered to a likely place for tea. Altho' we didn't feel hungry a prawn salad was very tempting & that went the way of all prawn salads. We came out, dodged a few showers, searched a few back streets, wasted a little time here & there, & eventually finished up in Chung Hui's for the meal of the day.

The picture at the Regal was "see my lawyer" with, I think, Olsen & Johnson, but it really was trips, relieved only by a few good variety turns. But the great point about these trips ashore is the benefit obtained from a complete change of scenery & routine, & I can truthfully say that I enjoyed every minute.

Today is very quiet & we sit back in our cabin listening to the buzzing of blue-bottle & wasps - the wasps' buzzes are far more interesting. My goodness! The great buzz now is that 4 groups a month are to be released from the end of this month, & already 25 groups is expected to go in a few weeks. Somebody has announced an

the radio that another 250,000 men  
are to be selected by the end of the year  
making a total of a million. Won't it  
be marvellous, darling, if I can get home  
for Xmas? If I do it'll mean that I've  
never had a Xmas away from you since  
I've been in the Navy. They tell me that  
24 hours after you step ashore in the U.K.  
you're on your way home as a civilian!  
That's really going some. Even now I'm  
turning over in my mind whether I  
shall take a lounge suit or a pair  
of flannels & a sports coat - I'm wondering  
what Kit I shall have to return -  
I've really got despatches very, very bad  
& it's useless for the Navy to expect any  
work out of me - they probably don't, anyway.

I haven't been able to get a  
home application form yet. Time's getting  
short & I'd like to get that away as  
soon as possible - I must jolly 'em  
along a little next week. I wonder  
if having a flat - if we do manage to  
get one - will spoil our chances of  
getting a house if one becomes available  
for ~~us~~<sup>us</sup> via the Lewisham Council? I  
think we'd prefer a house, a nice new  
one, don't you? Then we wouldn't



have to worry about squeezing in furniture for our permanent home - if Junior comes along a house is a better place for him than a flat. But, on the other hand, a flat is better than a bench in the park so whatever comes first we grab, eh sweet? It would be funny if I came home just in time to help you shift the furniture in, like I did when we moved to Blessington - would be, y'know.

At the moment, what with one news, & the prospects of going home, & getting rid of the bugs in me tummy, I've got the impression that life is just a bowl of cherries. That being so my heart is right to mortify point on account of you because, really, the news & the prospects wouldn't worry me in the least one way or the other if it weren't for the fact of being in love with you & wanting to be with you - regarding the tummy I think that would worry me in any event. Thus, these days, a softening influence is coming over me - by that I mean that my tendency to roughness & intolerance which might have been seeping into me during the

past few months is gradually being neutralised. I get all stargy-eyed + I babble - I've even read a Dornford Yates book this week, which only goes to show. Of course I'm not going simple, rather is my brain being sharpened. I realise that to keep myself in trim, mentally & physically, I've got to be up & about. I don't want the most wonderful wife in the world to have the awful experience of having to recognise an idiot for a husband - to have to apologise to visitors for that strange creature about the house. Oh no - I say to myself what's about it, the man, if you love that gal as much as you say you do that's quite a lot of love, & if she's got to reciprocate in like manner you'd better run over yourself to see if you can maintain your old heart-fluttering capacity. Well, as I say, the present position leaves me free to concentrate on love more than ever & I look forward to some very pleasant days ahead.

One of the aspects of married life I dwell upon is the old old problem of a woman's place in the home & of course, a man's place in the home. Now since

I've been out here I've learned to appreciate good food, simply because I rarely get any, & when thinking about our new home I'm apt to linger more in the kitchen than anywhere else - unless it be the bedroom. I see myself as a super cook, knocking up little dishes, exotic & just plain fancy, & I see myself having checks of a time - but I also see the little woman tapping her foot ominously in the background & I say to myself, Sh-sh! What I really wanted to ask was, do you think, baby, that you'd have any real objection to your old man grilling a steak, for instance now & again? I mean, do you consider that a kitchen is purely a wife's domain & a man's is the coal-cellar? It's asking a lot I know, but if you'll play ball with me I'll buy you an electric washing machine - that! Let me whip up an omelette now & again & I'll buy you a potato-peeling machine.

You'll excuse me ~~now~~ if I pop to now, won't you sweetheart. It's early

in the evening but I've made up my mind to write a lot of "lulu" letters tonight & if I don't get stuck into them they'll never get done. Then, too, Sunday is a nice quiet time for letter writing & the folks get more for their money - of course, when writing to you, honey, it wouldn't matter if there was a steam hammer in the cabin, (& there often is), I could still write what I wanted to because when you're in my mind everything else is out. I've had no mail again today & chat's made me just a tony bit choco, but a good supper will help drive away the blues & chat's what I'm going to have in a very few minutes.

Bye for now, dearest.

All the love in the world,

Les.

On Active Service

MARITIME

POST OFFICE

MARITIME MAIL

88(A) Belle Grove Rd.

Welling

Kent

England

HS

Received  
26.8.14