

77.

Bombay

30.5.45.

Darling,

What do you think! Your ex
was sent all round India before it
got to me on Saturday & it was
perfectly addressed. What an annoying
business. But it was well worth waiting
for because you say the sweetest things,
Baby, & in this life it's the sweet things
that matter, don't you think?

Today is going to be very rushed
- I am writing this a.m. in the middle
of a muddle, what with washing out
& what not, & afterwards I hope to go
to Beach Candy & later to the much
improved camp cinema, ("two 35mm
projectors, my dear") to see "Practically
Yours" which I believe is worth seeing.
So, without preamble, I will get down
to telling you of yesterday.

Going into Bombay these days
has a spice of adventure. Have you

read in your paper of riots in Bombay between the Hindus & the Muslims? The trouble is said to be due to the natural enmity between the two sects explained by the coming Congressional Elections, but it is certain that latent hoodlums & gangsterism has come to the surface. The result, for the past few days, is a reign of terror in certain parts of the city & to date, about 30 people have been stabbed or shot to death, & countless injured. A curfew has been imposed & the police have been armed & reinforced by troops. That was the position when we went ashore yesterday.

The centre of the disturbances has been in that district behind Crawford Market - I described a visit to that area in my log & I think my narrative foretold trouble, the atmosphere was electric - & Harold & I wanted to buy in the market! We were warned to go easy, not to poke our noses in other people's business, & in general, stay out of trouble. Five of us went ashore together.

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I wouldn't boast that we all are overburdened with courage, neither are we foolhardy - we agreed before we left that if knives came our way the mile would most certainly be run in 6 vine dead, breaking all records - but we did think that 5 Englishmen would put up a front to an Indian mob, & anyway, the trouble was not our concern & we believed that the riots, if any, would not touch us. I'd better work through the day in its proper sequence.

Our first point was to the Bokhara Palace grounds - well out of the riot-zone. There I bought Davis's second 6x3. ~~It was~~ & was told it would be sent off on Monday - I ascertained that the one large carpet is now well on the way. From there we took a taxi across town to the Market.

I wanted to get your costume material, etc & that meant going down the back alleys - I've told you how

complicated it is to get to the silk & cloth market. When we got there everything seemed quiet although there were police everywhere in batches of 6 + 12 with immense staves & their officers had revolvers at the ready. ~~It~~ It was evidently safe enough in the main road, for civilian Europeans with children were shopping unchalantly, & we felt slightly ashamed at our own fears. But when we got to the side turning leading back & beyond it was a different picture. Half the shops were shuttered up & the other half had their shutters at the ready (looting was rife). The people walked warily along looking all ways & there weren't so many of 'em either. A couple of our kull walked up to us & said that things weren't looking so healthy... I expect we weren't looking so healthy. But nobody suggested backing out & without a word we sauntered down. Of course we put on an air - we swaggered & laughed at the faces

peering out through grating & trellis gate. Windows in the upper stories had heads growing from them with eyes that shone with fear - we laughed at them, too. And so we arrived at the cloth bazaar feeling as tho' we'd dived all.

We found a suitable stall & the old boy was overjoyed at seeing real customers. His was near to the street, & the entrance was guarded by a posse of shopkeepers with the gates ready to be closed instantly. We forgot the street & started to enjoy the pleasure of bargaining. I wanted to see a brown chalk stripe but I wouldn't - he only had pin stripe material. I was shown countless rolls & had my usual black-out - I had to stop him at a roll of stuff that took my eye. It's a sheeny brown stuff with pin stripe & seemed to be strong & wearable. BUT all

these rolls made in India are only 28" wide - he did show me some English material 54" wide but it looked too insipid. I didn't know what to do because knowing nothing of the techniques of dress-making I wasn't sure if anything would be done with 28" width. But the price was R2 ~~12~~¹² a yd. & at that price I felt I wouldn't miss. I bought 8 yds costing R22 & if you think the material's lousy, honey, well there's no harm done if you sling it away.

During the bargaining the gate had changed & outside the trouble had started. Police were pushing every where & gangs were shouting & brandishing all sorts of weapons. It was obviously imprudent to go into the street for the time being, & anyway, the shopkeepers wouldn't have opened the gates for the Viceroy himself, & we should have had to have detoured through unfamiliar &

trouble-ridden alleys to get-out. So we went to the stall next door & looked at table cloths & curtaining material. It was a lovely stall.

I saw all sorts of tablecloths & bargained for a couple of check cloths, about 4' x 4' or larger - they are black & white squared with a touch of yellow. Maybe that sounds foul, sweet, but I liked 'em & beat him down from R15 to R12 for the pair. Later I'll buy some of the more wonderful material.

After this there was nothing to keep us in the market & we wanted to get cracking. It was useless trying to get out through the normal exits & we had to squeeze past cases, climb over bales, through noisome passages & backyards until, at last, we saw ahead a pukka street. We made for it, reached it, look around & found out - we were lost! Out

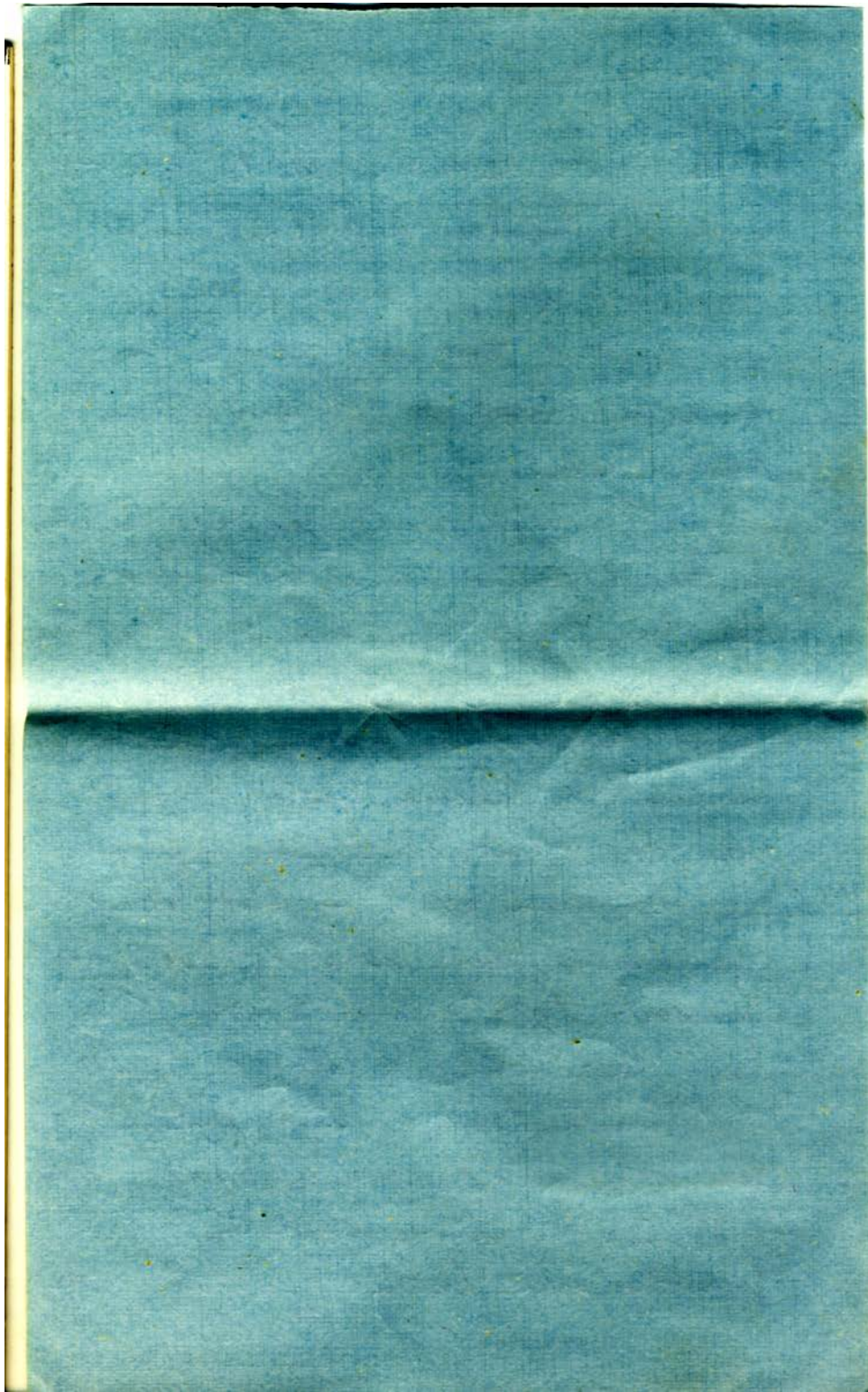
Sense of direction wouldn't cope with the twists & turns involved in getting out of the bazaar, & we were faced with the problem of finding the right street to get us to the main road, & not further into the rioting area, sounds of which came to us from every corner, altho' our street was quiet.

I needed an landmark to give me the cue for the right direction, & that was a large white mosque - but we couldn't see it. We could go four ways & even then the mosque may be hidden. Two policemen came rushing by & we attempted to ask them the way, but they rushed on waving us away - we wouldn't have understood them anyway. We walked in a bunch to one corner, peered round, saw what we didn't like, peered back, walked to the next & walked quickly back again. By this time a few stropky natives had fanatical their way along our

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street & had hurled what were obviously
insults at us. As there were only a few
of em we'd hurled insults back & stood
ready for trouble, but it passed over.
Every shop was, by now, shuttered, & it
was evident that we'd have to move
somewhere before we got involved in a
warty scene.

The next corner showed the way
to the Promised Land for there was
the big white mosque. Had the alley
leading to it was quiet. We walked
along, reached the mosque without
incident, & leading away from it
was the street at the top of which
was the main road - that road
you see in that snap of Crawford
Market that I sent to you. The
last street was, we felt, a Walk
of Triumph for our little party. The
only other people were a small batch
- 2 or 3 - of natives evidently lost
from the main batch of visitors & they



were being rounded up by the police. The others were not inclined to make trouble, (as is usual with hostages, they work with odds well in their favour) & we were able to convince ourselves that if they wanted any trouble we could accommodate them very easily. Besides, it was only 200 yds to the open & we swaggered & laughed our way along just as we had done when first entering the district. At the top of the street we all felt that it had been rather fun. I understand today that 20 more were killed yesterday

The flick we saw was "Mystic Spirit" & it was a very good take from the play. My, how the rich people do live! That house of Cyril Richards was a dream. But I think our house will be a dream too, only it might be a teeny bit smaller & we might not be able to run to a

work. Depends, I suppose, on how long before, or whether, I become a famous photographer. Takes time y'know.

2nd: After dinner, I receive, to my joy, post. Will soon be near your century, darling, + I think you ought to celebrate with a new hat on me. Keeping up the morale of a far-from-home husband is a pretty difficult job +, in as much as you've succeeded, I contend you should be suitably awarded. It will give me infinite pleasure, sweet, to hear that you've drawn a cheque + milled around a milliner's - but only after 10.100 mind.

Yes, the fever went + I'm none the worse for it. My throat has cleared, too, + except for a slight nasal snuffiness I'm perfectly O.K. The rhine have definitely ceased + we can look forward to a couple of months of hot weather in the day, wotting at nights. It's now possible to keep envelopes without having to muck around setting

the flaps unstuck & our gear is now free of mould. The sun has brightened our spirits amazingly & I'm sure we'll feel better from now on.

I laughed at your innocence in asking me to show you around Navy Week, sweetheart. The main centres of attraction are big ships & subs. - I ain't never been on none of 'em. If I got on a battle wagon I'd be lost, & as for explaining the workings of a 15" or a steam turbine - you might just as well ask Lesley Ann. Still, I'd probably be able to prevent you from making coarse gaffs like asking a four-ringer if he likes the Navy, or a three-budged waterse where the blunt end is. But that's about all. But I'd like to have a look round all the same.

Some people get some soft numbers. Taking tripped on at Westminster Pier!

Alively, it's the waterloo's dream. How
the hell do they get these drafts?
I bet the boys spin the most
awful yarns - I know I would
if I were there.

A little financial note, my auld
Aris' ^{2nd} carpet cost, with postage, R55
- thus her total bill is ~~R55 + R55 = R110~~
~~f2~~ $55 + 55 = R110 = f8.5.$

She therefore owes me f2.5. She
wrote the other day & said she'd
give you the extra when I present
the bill so the next time we go
down you'll be able to collect - I'll
write to her tomorrow. Put f2 in
the bank & buy yourself a lollipop
with the 5/- . If you're wondering
why I was able to buy carpet &
material and ~~pay~~ f2
after my last hard-luck letter,
I'll explain that pay-day was a
bumper one with R300! I don't
know whether it represents (a) back
pay from last summer on M.T.B. 764
(b) back pay for badge + increment

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from July 13th (c) Quarterly Settlement
plus (a) +/or (b) - but I didn't query
it. Also the carpet was Rio cheaper
than before & the material was very
cheap, don't you think? By the way,
I also bought 2 lbs of cooking fat,
("Marrow" in a tin), & 2 lbs of sugar for
you - about to be sent later - & cigars
& tea for father - as that's a Xmas present
I'll send that first - all parcel mail
has to be sent by Oct 9th for Xmas.
By the way again - to expedite parcel
delivery the Post Office has opened an
office in Weymouth to deal with Service
parcels only & in future I shall
address them "via Weymouth".

Do you think, darling, I
could start addressing parcels to
12 Blessington? It is that certain?
It would save hauling them from
8th (or) wouldn't it?

About the holiday, baby -
to be honest all my talks about Trozney

is mainly obelivie because I haven't
the slightest doubt that a whim
on our part will send us on a
vacation at an entirely different
place - & that's how it should be.
The country pub sounds just as
sweet as the Palm Court Hotel -
but, just for the heck of it, I
should send away for the brochure.
I'm easy to please, honey - all I
want for the perfect holiday is
(a) you, (b) a comfortable bed, (c) good
pub, & (d) good beer.

No further doubts now, but I
guess affairs are progressing satisfact.
A new month is due to start & "Out"
sounds much wiser to my Day than
"Sept". Getting funny feelings in your
tummy, doesn't? That's me, too.
Heavens, come to think of it, ~~it's~~ not
funny! I don't like it away from
you, sweetheart - I don't like it one
little bit.

I love you
R₂

Mr Active Service

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Received
7.10.45