

92.

Bombay.

4.11.45.

Dartney,
At last I have attained my heart's desire - no that's
no right, you're my heart's desire. At last I have got what
I've been wanting to get for a long time - no, that doesn't
sound right either because I've been wanting you for a long
time although "want" is hardly the word. I've bought a
camera - that's better direct to the point. It's a Zeiss
Ikon $f6.3$ to $f32$. - focussing down to $3'6''$ & $\frac{1}{1000}$ to $\frac{1}{100}$
T.S.B. - Quite a handy little affair & suitable for my present
requirements. Cost? - R 150 which I consider to be reason-
able considering the prevailing conditions. I bought it
yesterday in Hornby Rd & dithered for an hour before
leaving Co. of R 150 - I had to borrow anyway. I'm
afraid that even when the A/c comes through I shall
be a very poor man this month - in fact I imagined
at one time that having gotten the camera I would
have to wait another month before I could afford to
buy the film & have them developed & printed! Hence -
these guys with expensive tastes have a helluva time
in Bombay - I don't bother to put my money away
in the wallet now, I just keep it in my hands &
pass it out as tho it were a collection of tracts.

Of course, the camera purchase prevented me from
even contemplating further shopping & so I just wandered
around the streets window gazing. Now that imports
have started from England the variety of good class
stuff has visibly improved. For instance, practically

every jeweller sells Smith's Electric clocks from stocks & Sheffield ware can be had for the asking & paying. The Market Market has been busted wide open by the legitimate influx of goods & prices are dropping slightly altho cloth is still rationed. The Service population has varied in the most remarkable way - one week the streets are packed with them & the next week they are gone leaving an obvious gap. Naturally that's due to the departure of the troop transports & the merchants of Bombay can see that their most valuable customers are gradually leaving the land - that makes them unload their goods at lower prices, to get rid of them before they find all Service folk gone & their godowns full of stuff that the Indians would never buy.

When I bought the camera the bloke gave me a film & I was a happy man roaming round snapping at odds & ends, (I can take 16 snaps on a 120 film). I tried to get a shot of the favourite "Sport" in the streets - mongoose tailing snake - but the promoter saw me shooting & dived at me for back sheesh. The promoter himself I would have dealt with quite effectively, but he brought his snake with him & I fled - I don't like snakes & I don't think they like me. Being every inch a cameraman I stood on copings, in the middle of the road, & crouched on my haunches & did all the gymnastic tricks of

the trade & quite enjoyed myself, but, oh my, the locals do so make a fuss at any sight out of the ordinary - although one would imagine that the ordinary sights are extra-ordinary enough to irritate them to any sight. I tried to get a show of a blind beggar, looking down at him, but he saw me & abandoned his pose of humility to stand up to attention - no imagination.

The Mausetania was due in yesterday, & in the afternoon I went down to the Gateway to look for her. She ~~was~~ hadn't arrived then, but I saw her in the evening, all floodlit & impressive, & thought how very easy it would be to charter a row boat & slip out to her & stowaway. Of course the hardest part would come later so I thought no more of stowing away, but I did think how wonderful it would be to be drafted aboard her for home. She sails on the 10th with 5,000 aboard - 5,000 very lucky people.

I go now for 22 coffee.

No coffee - only tea.

This weather is really ideal. Cool breezes blow all day long & the sky is always cloudless. In the fields the villagers are beginning to harvest the rice & wheat, etc & after that they'll have to wait until the next monsoon before anything else can be grown. The ground is hardening & the dust is rising - in a month, except for a drop in temperature, conditions will be the same as we found

When we first came here - I don't think I shall like that. One good thing - the snakes have gone to ground again & we shan't be greatly troubled with those nasty creatures again. There were no cases of snake bite in the camp this season, but two or three have been bitten by scorpions which, while not fatal, bring on a nasty feverish state. Soon, too, we'll be able to walk over the hills behind the camp - one or two Globes have already tried it & have come back with tales of wild, very wild, dogs & jackals, & mischievous monkeys who throw nuts at you.

Did I tell you I've resigned my position on the Mess Committee? We've had a lot of changes in personnel in the last three months & the tendency now is to bring in young chaps to replace time-expired men & early Group numbers. I was beginning to regard myself as an early departure & so were the rest of the Committee so that we decided to resign & let the younger element carry on to the end of their time - we felt too that some of the more vociferous critics of the mess should have their chance to do all that we were expected to do under very difficult conditions - it was very noticeable that at the mess meeting these chaps were most retiring. As I've reported, all the improvements in the messing arrangements were immediately stopped after V.J. so that the old mess & canteen is still going strong. I suppose that the prospects of early release make us as content with these conditions as we could possibly be, altho' as the new buildings were practically finished ~~and~~ structurally we did feel that it was pretty

passionous of the Navy to jay in at that stage. We've had no EMIA concerts since June in the camp, but in Bombay John Gielgud is playing Hamlet - at least, he was, & I am mad at missing it. The next production in "Blithe Spirit" & I've just seen the film so that the play might seem an anti-climax.

Speaking of Hamlet brings to my mind the appalling lack of good companions when required for ^{accompaniment to} any high class entertainment. I was laughed at for suggesting getting tickets for Hamlet, & when I speak about Indian art or even Spike Hughes I'm regarded as "highbrow" - people are so of mediocre. I dislike labouring a point ~~but~~ but really darling I am lucky to have a wife like you who will not think me pretentious if I speak about a right-at-the-Pruss or the latest play - in fact I know that you'll be way ahead of me in appreciation of these good things & I'm going to be right on my mettle in conversation. That appreciation makes it very easy to balance the bad things that intrude on our peace - narrow-minded people must be desperately unhappy.

Ending a letter to you in these days, Honey, is as bad as saying goodbye in the old days at home. Maybe not as bad because you start talking to you again soon but for the minute I feel the wrench of parting. It's doubtful if my love for you shall ever reach greater heights than now - that's what I say now, feeling so intensely in love with you that more pressure would surely burst my heart in little pieces.

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Received

13.11.45

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