

Bombay.

25.11.45.

Fasting, Xmas is a month ahead today & I asked myself, 'so what'. Is this to be a Xmas set in an Indian Summer with Indian Chicken & Indian plum pudding, (which, I declare, will just about kill me), or am I to be at my ain fireside with an English Winter outside & an English wife inside, (which, I declare, is just about too good to be true). Or, I am to be plagued with a hearty, jolly rollicking Naval Affair on the high seas, where the men get nostalgic & drunk, (if it's a 'dry' ship they'd be nostalgic & choiced), & the officers act as Daddy Christmas's, & the Chaplain's sermon is more idiotic than ever before. What is to be my fate this coming Yuletide? Why the devil can't I think ahead in terms of weeks - just weeks - instead of being forced by convention, tradition, & feelings born in me by many years of happy Xmas times, to wonder & fret over the chances of being Home In Time. The effect is to make me Champ at the bit more than I should do, for my prospects are bright & normally I would count myself a lucky man - but if I don't get cracking soon I shall count myself an unlucky man & that's downright silly! There's no doubt about some people, is there sweet.

Carried away by fact, rumour & boyish enthusiasm I'm already packed & lashed, & the

magnitude of the luggage problem stuzzes me - literally. I've borrowed another Pussier's green suitcase in which to park the foodstuff only - it's choc-a-bloc full & weighs a ton, & I've had to reinforce the whole with much tiddly ropework. My hope is that somewhere between the Quayside & R.H.B. I shall be able to dump two cases, probably at either Southampton or Pompey Station, & pick 'em up when I come out on leave. As I left & took so much gear on 710 & 704 my kitbag will be comparatively empty - no overcoat, oilskin, No 3 suits, boots, shoes, or any heavy gear whatsoever. They tell me that there's very little to hand in re demobbing & that's just as well.

All our talk now centres around The Event. We wonder if we have time for this or that: we ponder over luggage space & arrangements & work out the gear we'll need on the journey: we plan now the action to be taken from the Customs to the dash from R.H.B. to Pompey Sta.: we discuss the matter of to declare or not to declare to the Customs official & we wonder what we can get away with: we wonder how the devil we can get news to our wives & girl-friends - or girl friends perhaps I should have said - on arrival in England & we argue whether it's best to meet them someplace or ~~near~~ <sup>the</sup> play that scene, so beloved of journalists, where the wanderer walks up the garden path & halfway up catches the flying body of his wife in his eyes

arms, (of course, at this stage, one gets the inevitable joke that he's only playing for time while the Other Man gets away on the back door). Poor Harold feels rather out of it because Jim, Bob & myself - 32, 32 + 35 - are due to go in the next batch & it doesn't appear that he'll go for a few weeks after. We can't help talking about going & he gets very choiced.

The big buzz now is that we go for our medical on Tuesday. If, repeat if, that happens we shall be away from here to Brazzaville within a week. When, repeat when, that is over I shall tell you to stop writing, & all you've got to do is sit back in our best armchair & wait for further bulletins which will follow as fast & as often as I can manage. Keep cool, calm, & your powder dry, & before y'know it, Huey, I'll be wrapping mesel' around you in the most loving manner.

Pause, whilst I ponder pleasantly & passionately on the above.

Coming back to earth, & whilst I think of it, I'd like to mention that the shipping agents for our cargo from Bombay to England are Lee & Muirhead, & if it doesn't arrive in the next fortnight I'd advise you to contact 'em & shake 'em up a bit. Actually it's only just about due, but a consignment might have got held up somewhere due to the strike & they haven't bothered. Nevertheless I'd like it to arrive before you

Get settled in No. 12 - perhaps a phone call or a letter will work wonder. If it's lost, of course it's insured & we'll get our money back - I'll try to afford another 7'x4' or the biggest I can to take its place - what I mean is I'll buy this last rug in any case as it'll fit in somehow, sometime, & while the carpet is either on its way or getting lost we can use this last one in the large room

I went into town last evening to meet George for the last time before he sails next Thursday. We saw a really good film - "Junior Miss" - & I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Read Beverly Nichols's "Verdict on India" - I think you should read it too. It's kicked up quite a furore out here & Mr. Nichols is thoroughly hated by one & all. Of course it's a very one-sided verdict written by an ardent Westerner with a more than a touch of Christian religionism & the poor India doesn't get a single break. I agree with most of his book, but I don't agree with some of his findings, & as I've heard you say, dear ol' Bev. has got quite an ego which finds its way into his writings, so that you have the feeling that he'd be most annoyed if you suggested that he might be wrong, or of that maybe he hasn't been long enough in India to really decide one way or the other. There is now a pamphlet entitled "Verdict on Beverly" which I must read - I can imagine the tone of it! But

do get the book, Honey, & read the impressions of India by a really pukka Englishman - I'm certain that he expresses the opinion of thousands of his type & class. Incidentally, I wish I could write as well & as descriptively as he does - it's nice stuff.

Dr off to Juhu this afternoon to get a basinful of their wonderful weather - trying to get as many ultra-violet rays on the skin you love to touch as possible before I have to brave an English winter. Tonight I shall probably go to the Camp flicks, or I might read, "Murder in the Loakhda" - I'm very catholic in my tastes. At intervals I shall go into a reverie, a very pleasing one, & wonder when - - - - - !!!

So, bye for now Baby & start toughening y' lips for kissing purposes, arms for hugging purposes, & chuff for patting purposes. Wood, wood!

Loof,  
P.S.

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