

2.12.45.

Dashing,

A visit to Juhu has its pleasant-moments - many of them - but the aftermath is a very sticky one. As with most of India ^{things are exaggerated &} the sea around its shores has twice as much saline content as in England - the result is that to swim, & then dry out in the hot sunshine, means acquiring a covering that is treacle-like in ~~the~~ substance. That's the way I am at the moment & very uncomfortable it is indeed.

Juhu is very crowded ~~indeed~~ these days with masses of servicemen & women, & surprisingly enough, a sudden deluge of Indians. I am surprised because the Indian of the orthodox type usually prefers to make his sport, especially swimming, in his own backyard - I believe he objects to his women showing off their torsos to the Westones. Be that as it may, 30% of the crowd today was composed of Indians with the women predominating & the effect was startling. Indians, when they do consent to mix with infidels, manage to ignore their presence & in a manner that is remarkable for its efficacy - in the midst of white bodies the black ones take on an aloofness that ~~effectively separates~~ separates them as effectively as if the beach were divided by a huge wall. They sit in their circles & address us unconcernedly as tho' they were in their own bedrooms. When they

Stroll along the beach in groups they wade through & over other parties without taking the slightest notice. When they swim it is in a part of the sea devoid of white people, & if we happened to stray to that part they either leave the water or move over. Don't think for a moment that anybody objects to this arrangement, but the gulf is so wide & noticeable that it calls for comment.

Some of these Indian women have lovely figure, some have the most gawk-awful figures you ever did see, but they all wear the minimum of material for swim-suits & the effect is pleasing & soothing at times. One ~~old~~ middle-aged woman was actually about seven months gone with child, but she acted ^{swam.} & dressed (?) with the air & abandon of a teen-age girl!

The beach is more colorful as a result of this influx of Indians, & I enjoyed this afternoon.

Today has been a quiet day in every sense. Jim & Harold have been sick with stomach trouble & the aftermath has left them fit only for craving their sweedes. With many on draft & half the remainder on leave the camp seems pretty empty, & even 'Divisions' was cancelled because of the lack of available men. The usual two-convoy to Juba was reduced to nine of us in a small 15cwt. Above all, the lack of men has meant a reduction in the daily quota of buzzed & animated conversation in huts on the eternal topic has ceased. The only exceptional incident

is taking place in our cabin at this moment & because of my need of peace to write this letter, I feel a little annoyed. They're talking, or worse, about chomping, & it seems that by the end of next week up to 39's will be away - don't jump, Honey, because that's the way buzzes are introduced & they mean just as much as if they'd said the 35's were already on the boat. Naturally somebody knows somebody who knows somebody who's seen a signal which says this & that & it's considered the wrong thing to do to enquire too closely into the identity of the original somebody - it makes the buzz, even if true, somewhat nebulous. That's what makes the business of getting news so damned unsatisfying - if an officer comes up to you with a draft that in his hands & gives it to you you immediately suspect a lie, pull & proceed to check it up. Still, I'm in the process of gaining confidence & reassurance from the official signal that has been on the notice board for a month but has, hitherto, been ignored because we prefer to base our hopes on Dame Rumour - the signal says that Groups 32-39 will be released between 1st Jan & 25th Feb. As the 35 my release in this period will be about the middle of Jan. As I have to be in England ready for this release at that time I must be on draft from this place

In the middle of Dec. - thus, even official sources give me the greatest hope, so what am I worrying about? I can't even say that official promises cannot be relied upon, because all such promises have, to date, been fulfilled - What, indeed, am I worrying about? I'll tell you what I'm worrying about - I'm worrying about the next two weeks - I'm concerned at my mental state, & wondering if I can last out before I leave - two weeks! It's a lifetime.

We had a rare old time in town yesterday with the camera film racket. I came back with four spools! It was an afternoon of wangling, pleading & threatening - I was determined to get results for I needed spools for the journey home. We invaded shops that were left with the echoes of our voices still ringing an hour afterwards, (I know that because I went back to one of them & as I stepped into the shop I heard my own voice saying "now look here, I know you've got some - - -"). One snag is that 3 of the 4 are 620s that need re-rolling onto a 120 spool holder, but that's a minor technical hitch. Aziz's carpet went off - I sorted out one that I liked, but the price was R 55 & I was only to pay R 45. The bloke was evidently fed-up with life that afternoon for he conveniently transferred the rug to the R 45 pile to save further time & trouble in fixing me up. I

very nearly grabbed that ray for us - it's a nice one - but my Better Self came to the fore & made me feel ashamed of me - after all I was using D's money - & so it was despatched to Quibaldi St.

Afterwards we saw Miss Betty Crable in "Diamond Horseshoe" & we agreed that the Crable Body improves with age, & that we seem to see more & more of it with each picture.

Yesterday was Navy Day in Bombay. Many processions were in evidence, there was a Grand Navy Ball, our officers had a private do in their mess, the papers eulogised suitably & Jack Tar was the toast of the clubs. But little Cheetah II indulged in none of it - we weren't represented in the processions, nobody invited us to the Ball, the officers pinched our liberty lorries to transport their guests, the Indian newspapers ran the war with the couple of Indian-manned sloops that operated in the Arabian Campaign, & if the toast was 'Jack Tar', none of the toast came our way. We walked around town in the evening in our ordinary sp-to-tour rig, & jostled with regalia-sieged naval people going to or coming from some celebration or other - cars were full of Jenny Wrens & their escorts & the R.I.M. Dockyard was ~~glistening~~ gaily-coloured with lanterns. We phoned frantically for a Liberty truck to take us back & eventually one arrived - the truck that loads coal for the Galley! Navy Day!!!

A request, sweet. Will you get a few Yachting periodicals as you go along & retain them for me, please. I want to catch up on the latest news. It looks as tho' we shall have to defer buying a boat for a while - I imagine boat prices have soared as all prices have - but I'm thinking of chartering a small yacht for holidays, say at Poole. A dry boat 16'-20', half decked, would be ideal for pottering about Poole Harbour & it'd give us a bit of experience before we plunged into the market. I haven't forgotten all our plans for keeping the sea as our background - our sails will spread just as sure as the sun rises, but adjustments to these plans must be made as circumstances demand. When you next speak to Blue or Tom sound them on the subject & tell 'em that if they want to keep up with the latest & best in living they'd better start getting nautically-minded. I know that they, & Jim too for that matter, are quite enthusiastic - or they were - but they might have forgotten our plans. When I get there I'll see to it that they move with the times - provided the cash is available, of course.

After you've moved in, Baby, sit down one evening in our best armchair, get y'self comfortable, & have a good think about this business of staying on at work after I get back. I know we've had this out before, but here's a new angle that

occurred to me the other day in one of my many brooding moments. Many times in the past I've heard you say that you'd like to continue studying this or that - that you'd like to take up something else - that you think a course on X will do you a power of good. If you had no daily employment, Angel, you'd have time to take up any studies for which you have an inclination. Music, for instance - the Blackheath Conservatoire of Music is quite near, & there are several ordinary colleges around the district. I know you've declared a desire to go in for local politics, & a study of local government might be your wish. The more I think of it the more I realize that here's a chance for you to catch up on your education, (it's surely unnecessary for me to explain that I don't ~~mean~~ mean that in any derogatory sense), & other considerations apart, I know that you'd want that. If it were me in such a position I'd jump at the chance to get some more essential knowledge in the right way, i.e., sitting at the feet of an expert & learning methodically & systematically, instead of learning the hard way by reading & poring out for oneself. If we stick to our plans the family won't be started for a year & you'd have all that time to study. (I tell you, Sweetheart, I'm seriously considering spending two or three nights a week at night-school - my appetite for learning has been considerably sharpened by the

last three years) It's just a suggestion, although it's also part of my policy of placing a wife on a much higher footing than the traditional 'little woman' in the home who says "yes, dear" + "no, dear" to a husband full of flannel. Not that I think ~~you are~~ you are stereotyped in any way, honey, but if you did have any ideas of continuing your schooling I thought you'd like to know, & be sure, that hubby here is all for it.

Regarding the above, further thoughts prompt me to warn you that, enthusiastic as I am about adult education, any attempt to discuss the Theory of Pythagoras whilst locked in close embrace in the bedroom will be severely discouraged.

Which brings me to the end of this evening's Mail Call. I've deliberately refrained from letting too sentimental a note creep into this letter because I fear a repetition of ~~last night's~~ the night before ~~last~~ last when my passions ran riot, only tonight they threaten to outdo themselves. If that were to happen with a pen in my hand the resultant letter would be too hot to carry. Therefore, I coldly & most formally declare that I entertain only the most warmest feelings towards you, that I hope & trust we can be more than friends & that — oh pish!

Darling, I think you're the most wonderful girl in the world, & I kiss your feet, your hands, your eyes, your lips in an agony of love.

I worship you,

TC

Mr. Arctic Service

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