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Bombay.

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I suppose Darling, that I can account myself a reasonably happy man today - one who has been the happier from yesterday's Anniversary message you will have gathered that something, a little out of the ordinary had happened, something, however, that had been expected for a long time. Yet, when one weighs it up, the situation, actually, isn't so very different from a week ago. Confused, honey? Well that's natural so I'll give the whole dope in chronological order. Three days ago when, as I've never ceased to report, the camp was seething with repressed emotions, the Divisional Officer called in three men & told them that their drafts to the U.K. were here & whilst he wouldn't tell them when they were going, he would give them the tip to get their gear on top line ready for draft. Now those three men consisted of two Group 39s & one 38 - the reaction to this news was that the men, including myself, who were under 39 wanted to know all about it. We ferretted about & altho we couldn't get anything official the day finished with all men up to 39 fairly satisfied that the lot were in the same position as those three men, but that, for some reason, those three were singled out for special attention; before

We could sit back satisfied we had to have something more official, & to know why nobody else had been told. The next day was, frankly, spent fun for us, (for the previous night had rounded up with drinks & general discussion - Logic had made it clear to us that this ~~was~~ was the pay-off), & hell for all officers within button-holing distance of us. But we did confirm that all men ~~is~~ in Groups from 32 to 39 would be going shortly & that their draft cheques were in existence somewhere between the Drafting Office at Braganza & Chectah II. We also discovered the reason for the singling out of the three men - they were "key" men & as the matter of their reliefs had been thrashed out the D.O. had taken it upon himself to warn them of impending draft - a silly move in view of the disturbance it caused amongst the unwarned men. The present position is this - the Jimmy has said that he cannot tell us ^{yet} when we shall be leaving Chectah but that it will be "soon". There are four big transports leaving in the first half of Dec - "Georgie", "Strathairn", "Il de France" & "Pasteur" & none in the second half. The "Strathairn" & the "Il de France" sail on the 12th - the "Il de France" goes round the Cape, (too deep a ~~draft~~ draught to go through the Suez), & will spend Xmas in Durban. Presumably,

altdo' I have no information, - the other two will sail later. We are also told that ~~in actual fact~~ ^{on paper} we are on draft, but in actual fact we are held up because of accommodation difficulties - whether on the boat or in the barracks I don't know. I think it must be the latter because we hear tales of plenty of shipping accommodation.

The above is the sum total of all official information to date, to hour, in fact. Strange to say buzzes have been very slack for the past two days - I think everybody is so keyed up that they haven't repeat any news that isn't confirmed a dozen times. The big relief is the feeling that we're on draft - the knowledge that the wheels are turning & will gather impetus as the days go by. I wish I could say definitely when I'll be off, Honey, but this is no time for conjecture - I must be sure. However, I've already told you, & I'll repeat - don't write to me any more because, with the mail situation as it is, maybe 30 days will elapse before I get a reply to this one & by that time, whatever the delay, I certainly hope to be away. I don't want your mail loafing around Fleet Mail Offices. Of course, I shall continue to write up to the last moment - thinking it over, Ret, I don't see the need for cables - letters are

only a few days later & will tell you a lot more than a word, formal cablegram. So, no cables.

After all that I repeat - I want myself a reatm-ably happy man. The air has been cleared of suspicion that we were forgotten - lovely lists have been typed headed "Men due off for V.I. draft" & my name is on them - I can now hear very clearly, the ship's siren as she slips up the channel away from the fleshpits of Bombay with me aboard. Eyes are brighter, hearts are lighter - why am I not a completely happy man? How the devil can I be that with you still 7,000 miles away!

We'll leave ~~the~~ the matter of going home for the time being & get going with notes & notions on all the mail I've received from you in the past four days - up to 129, with 127 missing.

I think I'd better say a few more words about that damned carpet. Don't worry any more about it, sweetheart, because I'm perfectly sure it'll turn up at some time. In matter of fact, just before I leave Bombay, I shall go to the offices of Bee & Muirhead & ask for the date it left Bombay, (it might have been held by them awaiting a ship), the date it's due in England, & the cost over for them in England. In any case I think you'll be able to manage with those you already have - maybe it won't be as good

at a large carpet but nobody's going to shed tears over that, eh Baby? It's pretty certain I'll have enough cash to buy a ~~6x3~~^{6x3} before I leave + that'll go by mail so that we'll have an addition pretty shortly
 * after I arrive home. Just don't worry that lovely little head of yours about this matter, Pet, because there ain't nothink you can do about it + your old man will do all the chasing possible.

Tis lovely informed that all P.O.s + drafts have arrived safely + satisfactorily disposed of long since. I'm hanging on to what I'm left with so that I can jingle a few coins in my pocket on the journey over. We get paid up to date plus a fortnight which should work out - somewhere near ~~the~~ a month's money.

If you haven't got my 5/6 yet Honey, I should tell you that it was a short one telling you of the latest demit's news, + that I'd received the pipe + the f10. Have I mentioned the pipe since? It's going a treat +, since it's new, quite my favourite smoe. I'm afraid the other are getting a bit rank + I'll have to trot 'em along to Danhill when I get back.

The income tax form I shall enclose in another envelope.

* See try + figure it so that the new one will match the old one, in effect, a rug 6x6.

Regarding No. 12, may I say, Mrs. Westaway, that you are to be heartily congratulated on the whole turn out. You've organised it damn well, sweetly, to get everything on the spot in time, & you've relieved me of one of my biggest anxieties, (in the early days of this foreign commission), that of where would we lay our little heads when I came home. I suppose we can manage ^{nicely} for a while without the new chairs, altho' if Maples are as smart as all that, they will be delivered by the time I get back. You were right, Pat, to stick to the bare necessities for a while - not, let me say, from the financial viewpoint but because I think I'd get a deal of fun doing a little of this year's shopping for the home, & now you've left me a bit I'll be able to wander usefully through the 2 months' leave. I was going to ask you all sorts of things, but I forgot that you'll never be writing to me in India again, (pauze for handclaps), & unless you've anticipated me, I'll have to wait the evening that I first see it - (horrid thought! don't forget the Reg, darling).

Now I really am pleased that the quilting is useful to you - I felt I was pretty safe with the tablecloths, but when I bought the material I had qualms ~~that~~ ~~was~~ about its suitability for a girl's outfit. That's a smashing idea to have a

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pair of slacks out of it - with your hips, Beautiful, you'd look a pip. But what the hell's a "pinafone skirt"? One without a back to it? Tch, Tch! - the things you modern women think of. Making the outfit yourself? or getting Sister Joan to do it? Ha! there I go again - regard my questions as mere rhetoric my sweet. Yesterday I sent off the stockings & ^{parcel} ~~album~~, after many awkward minutes asking myself whether I should send it or take it with me. But parcels are only taking 6 weeks & it won't be so long after me - if you're thinking wifey dear, that I'm an old silly on account of you wanting to don the stockings as soon as pos., I would reply - (a) I still ain't so sure they're the real me they, not knowing much about these things, (b) I'll probably manage to grab another couple of pairs to bring along with me.

Well now - today I got a letter from you dated 30th Nov. It was pleasing in two ways - it only took 5 days to get here, & it said nice things about me. Of course, love being what it is, I don't take compliments from you, Angel, & regard them as flannel, but I do feel it my duty to tuck 'em down a bit. Being in love with you means, in this connection, only one thing - that each night, after work, when I sit in the cabin & think of you, & yes, I have a quite uncontrollable urge to get as near to you as I can - by letter. I don't mean that I'd control the

wage if I would, but it's no effort on my part to sit here at this desk & pour out my news & feelings, it's just as natural a thing to do as sleep or eat. I write to you most nights - the only exceptions are show nights - but I send the letters off alternate nights in an effort to avoid any staidness or sameness that might creep into a conscious effort - to get the night mail-through. If my letters are all you say they are, Precious, then either I'm good or you're prejudiced - whether ~~it's~~ it's the former or the latter, or both! it's a great rich to me to know they bring you consolation. I won't be so gauche as to try & return the compliment now - I think we both know what mail means to the other - to me it's worth more than gold.

When talking about my arrival in England you've let yourself go a bit more than I'm prepared to at this stage. It's all very well for me to soliloquise on such a matter when the prospects of home-coming are nebulous, but when they become more defined I dare not trust myself to speak or write. Like you, darling, I choke with emotion at the thought of it - my head swims when I visualise our meeting - I can't believe I've come to the end of our trial - unbelievable! But it's true, darling, it's true.

Love be

Ray

Active Service

MARITIME

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Welling

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