

On Board H.M.S. Rajah.

Yule's Eve.

To think of Xmas, Darling, At a time like this, & under these circumstances, is a very emotional experience. One thing, I most certainly can't feel Xmas as I used to know it, even in its grimmest wartime garb. Today we are in the middle of the Arabian Sea, heading for Aden, & the tropical sun with gleaming sea makes every ~~day~~ day & every season as alike & as monotonous as a bag of peas, & I sigh for the crisp cold air of England with the compensating fireside & the cheery fellowship of friends & relations. At this season, & on this ship, I'm very much alone, for nobody can be my companion during days when all I can think of is home & love - happy thoughts of course, but none the less lonely thoughts. There'll be the usual hearty attempts to bring the spirit of Xmas into the messes, with turkey & plum pudding & a ration of beer, but ~~what~~ it'll be a failure.

I'm not worried that Xmas & New Year festivities should go by without you, Sweet, & the gang & family, because this season witnesses the approachment of a climax to an era of campaigning in love & war - in both I've been

Successful - more so in love - & the finish will find me ready to taste forever the fruits of the former, whilst I shall gain by the experience of the latter. The good ship *Rajah* is pounding out 16 knots - 16 sea miles in every hour towards peace & contentment & I can't complain just because an accident of time prevents our meeting this Yuletide - but it would have been nice.

I'm hoping this letter will go ashore at Aden - if you receive it you'll know we reached the port on schedule - 27th - & at you read it we shall be half way through the Med. You'd better adjust your imagination at this stage, for at this time of the year 'Blue Mediterranean Skies' are a myth & we shall most likely be wallowing in a Gale. From then on the skin you love to touch will be ice-cold to the fingers, & the brown tan will take on a sickly hue. The galley won't do such a brisk trade as it has been doing for the past two days & the bubbling spirits will be subdued - these'll be men who won't care if they never reach England if only the ship would dock right away. The schedule definitely names Sheerness as our destination but I'm not so sure now that we'll go into Chatham - all the better if we don't. It has been confirmed, too, that the 11th Jan. is the estimated time of arrival which is at

all bad for a packet of this description. Put that date down in your diary, Sweetheart, & listen for the sound of bells - telephone bells - from then on.

Life aboard is very monotonous. Although it has been fitted up as a trooper it is really not an ideal type because of the lack of amenities. Sleeping accommodation, (for P.O.'s), & food is quite good, but we have no library or radio, a very makeshift cinema that appears to work only once a week, poor washing facilities, & poor prospects of exercise when the rough ~~like~~ weather comes, for the flight deck is the only promenade. Obviously, any complaints are met with the stock reply, "after all, you're going home & surely you can put up with it for 3 weeks" - all very true & we certainly can put up with it, but in recording my opinion of the ship I am forced to say that lack of normal amenities makes the trip very dull. We did have a sports meeting this afternoon but I cannot fall in love with anything the Navy organises because of the element of compulsion in it - I like to be very slip-happy about my sports but when the Navy have a hand in it it's all done by numbers - purely personal prejudice, I don't doubt that a goodly number of the lads enjoyed their afternoon.

leaning on the rail & looking into the turbulent water at the stern I get a wonderfully

new view of you my Angel. The wavelets form themselves into your divine features & your expressions are infinite. Strangely enough - or is it? - your face changes with my moods, but, glory be, as I feel happy all the time the changes are degrees of joy & the sun beams down on both of us. I shan't enjoy gazing into the water when the day is stormy & dull for it will cloud over the brilliance of your smile - no, the muddy water will be no medium for you, dearest, & maybe, most of my time will be spent in my bunk staring at the deckhead & being just a little more practical in my thoughts - thinking of the life we both have yet to live together & trying to work out the mathematics of it all. As I so often declare to the rest aboard here, I just can't realise that I'm on my way home - things like this just don't happen to ordinary people like me - and yet ---! Maybe it would be better if I spent my bunk-time in getting to realise it all; after all I've got to get used to the idea at some time or other & it would never do to be left behind when the ship docks at Pheoness merely because I failed to appreciate that the V.R. draft included me. No my love, I've got you at stake & my brain must be alert to keep me ahead in the race.

LATER: Greetings from Aden, my dearest, & of course  
Love for

(115)

Mrs.

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