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Nov. 5. 43

Mrs. K. G. SHAWCROSS

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Capt. K.C.W. Shawcross RAMC

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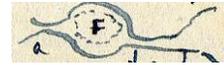
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India Command

26/10/43

My Dear Chubby. Here I am back with my nose at the grindstone. As a matter of fact I do not look like being as busy as I was before my leave. Now to tell you all about my leave. I told you, all about my four days in Mysore on the third day I went up in Chamundi(?) Hill by Foxs (?) and saw the temple & sacred bull, & then went out to Seringapatam, about nine miles out. Doubtless you could read about that place if you read the history of India, because it was the scene of big battles between the Indian Tippu Sultan & british soldiers. I saw Colonel Scots bungalow, which is preserved exactly as it was a hundred years ago. Furniture, pictures, bed, and Durbar platforms. The bungalow is situated by the side of a wide river bend & the forests & scenery round it are beautiful. Also I saw Tippus tomb, palace, & the huge fortress of Seringapatam, which the British took in the end, it has 3 gigantic moats & walls, & the fortress is in the loop of two rivers.



The British officers were in prison in a dark dungeon in the walls there for years, until it was finally captured it by crossing the river & firing on one small section of the wall until they breached it. I also went to the arts & crafts & bought two beautifully carved elephants, one in Sandalewood & the other in Rose wood. They stand about 3" high. I may send them home, later, also an inlaid rosewood cigarette box, which has a very ingenious patent for bringing up cigarettes one at a time. At 8-30 on the fourth morning I took my place (The front seat next to the driver) in the jungle bus. I call it that, because it is a small & very ramshackle affair & set off on the 7 hour drive to Oota? commund. The first part of the journey was like Cheshire scenery, open fields & downs, with copses & villages. Of course native villages of 70 or 80% of the population of India are just as primitive as anything in Central Africa. They live in little huts, which are usually too low to stand up in & wear just enough rags to clothe themselves. They squat outside the doors with their women & hordes of naked

children, & scratch a living out of a bit of land in the vicinity, with primitive(sic?) instruments. They carry out all their natural functions under the nearest bushes, (if they are not too far away) in fact they live exactly the same way as their ancestors have done for 3000 or more years. That is the standard of living of 2 or 3 hundred million Indians. The majority of the remaining four hundred million would come up to the standard of the very poorest classes in Ireland & the remaining .01% are the intelligentsia who go to English Universities and tell the British all about enlightened & emancipated India. They can be reckoned in the hundred thousands. The baboo class. That is why the government of this country should be left to people who have been out here & know India. Churchill knows India, he was here as a soldier. We think he knows what he is doing in spite of the probable contrary ideas from the remainder of the government who have no knowledge of India.

Later on in the trip we began to climb into the mountains & then we got into real jungle for about forty miles, so thick that you might take a week to cut your way through a mile of it, & the road by a series of hairpin bends, climbing steeply up 3000 4 5 6000 feet with the forest still thick as ever, & the road just a narrow slit through it. Every now & then a huge river, with brown waters winding away into its dark belly. Then it got a bit more open, with great trees without the bushes, creepers & bamboos, choking up the interspaces, into the clouds & rain, & on up to 8000 feet, finally on the top, down to Ootacamund the country for the last 10 miles being hilly, but not mountainous as we were on the top of the mountains. Green fields, hills covered by big trees, firs, spruce, larch & lakes, & gorse, yellow, scattered over the grass just like North Wales, & finally to Ootacamund itself; a small place rather like Bowdon, scattered up and down hills with steep winding roads with beautiful houses on hillsides, surrounded by lovely gardens, with larches & firs & such like trees. Bowdon would well describe Ootacamund except Ootacamund is almost 8000 feet up. The place I stayed in is an Officers Hostel was a Maharajah's palace; a lovely place, huge ballroom, & Persian carpets on the floor, Leopard & tiger skins on the walls, heads of Tigers, lions, leopards, boars, deer, & elephant tusks. Two comfortable lounges with fires from midday, after tea it gets quite chilly. By day I wore my Harris tweed, grey jacket, cotton shirt, & tie (I bought) grey flannels. At night Service dress. I quite

enjoyed wearing Civvies again & slouching about 2 weeks without having to salute every other minute. I shared a large room with two other officers, with bathroom attached. Hot bath twice a day ah! luxury. They were very nice chaps & about on the second day I got in with a crowd of chaps, who I sat at table with, went to the flicks, & dances with, and played billiards, table tennis (at which of course I rapidly became king on about the 3rd day when I got my eye in) and croquet on a large lawn, (that is quite a good game too). The weather was, fine & clear, every morning up to lunch time & then it rained like stink for the rest of the day.

Well I had expected rather a lonely & quiet holiday, with plenty of time for reading & writing. Actually, I was always doing something & only had time to read two books. Nanking road which I enjoyed, & all our tomorrows, which was beyond me, not my style. I keep my bowels open very well while I was there. The food was excellent & I had a bottle of beer nearly every morning before lunch. Very good beer too. That's why I kept my bowels open so well- beer is good for you. I had only an opportunity to go to one dance. I was unlucky. There was one on the evening I arrived, but I didn't go because I was very tired & did not know any one. Then halfway through there was one, which I enjoyed very much, as many women as men, & in the Paul (?) Jones(?), I got a partner every time. Then although I went with an almost completely (except for one officer & his wife) male party, I managed to find people for a few dances. & the end at 1-0 AM arrived quite quickly. Then our own Arraneræ(?) dance, arranged by our own officers, which looked like being a good do, unfortunately fell on the evening of the day I left. Still I enjoyed my holiday very much. A rest from medicine, a complete change of climate & scenery. A rest from this 8 hour day writing that I get let in for in my job; good food, pleasant companionship. It was a lazy holiday, but it suited me. At 8000 feet you get short of breath the first 3 days on the slightest exertion, such as walking up a slight incline, but by the time I left I could walk fast, up the steep mile & a half hill from the lower road out of the town, with little discomfort.

One officer I met there & travelled back with, is named Pontsford. He is a Devon man, but like me spent much of his life the last 10 years in N. London. He married a girl from Hornsey. Ferne(?) park road. They

married at the beginning of the war. She is now in Devon & has twins, her sister is still in Hornsey. Do you know these names) Margaret Stuckey & forget the christian name of younger sister. Older sister about your age, younger one about 19 or 20. He is an engineer. Well darling I hope you find these descriptions of my holiday interesting. I have about 27 photographs, which I will send you by degrees by Airmail with a few remarks on the back. I think some of them are quite good & you will find them very interesting. I am glad you got one parcel any way, with the book. I will arrange for Westminster to send you some cash about Dec 15th. so you can buy something for yourself, & a present for John. I wish I could buy something out here & send it in but at his age, I don't know what to get & he will think it has come from me if you bring it in as a parcel from Daddy. This year has gone very quickly hasn't it darling. It only seems yesterday I was serving the Xmas Dinner at Bombay to my patients, & here we are again in November, almost 1944. Sixxxx said we must get the war over quickly, first thing next year. The Russians are still pressing on. Who knows perhaps next Xmas we shall be together again at last. & I shall be able to play father Xmas to John & take you out for trips to Town, to shows & dinner & dances. Won't it be wonderful darling? I have had more very nice letters from you since I got back. I got a sea mail letter, of July with 3 photos of you & B & John, & a postcard from M on her holidays. Don't worry about me darling. I am getting happier as the day of our reunion draws nearer with giant strides All my love my L.B. of C. Kenneth

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Written in ENGLISH.

No. 11544 Zl.

Sender's Rank CAPTAIN.

Name SHAWCROSS, K.C.O.