

1780 words beat that!

Capt. K.C Shawcross
No 154421 RAMC
% Grindlay & Co
Bankers
Bombay
27/1/43

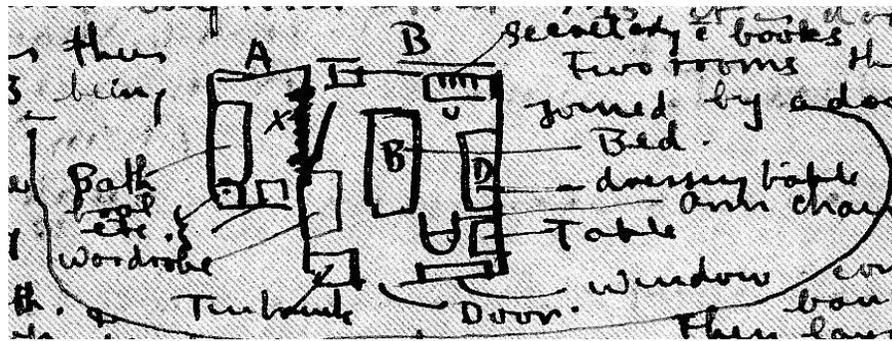
Deary Mrs T't (?) Annie

This is your husband writing to you after a lapse of several days. I am once more up to the neck in work. I had a slack time over Xmas, but this last 10 days have been times when I think I have earned my pay. Incidentally I feel that I should get my pay for nothing. Still I am ten times more contented when I have some work to do. At this moment I am sitting in the Orderly Med Officers room at the hospital. It is 8.30 P.M. & I have been busy all day, without a break, except for two short ones for meals. I have not exactly been neglecting you darling even though I have not been writing. Yesterday I made up a parcel containing 3 yards of some material for you for a dress. Now I have 5 parcels, which I shall proceed to send off one every ten days for the first two & then less frequently.

I have been thinking about us, & I wondered whether the exchange of letters between us have been quite fair in their implications. You see, I will try & explain, I know exactly what your surroundings are, who you are meeting, & what you are doing, well! most of the time anyway which means that your letters bring you pretty close to me, but on the other hand, my life is very much a closed book to you so that, you have no clear mental picture of my surroundings, how I spend my time & of my friends. Thus I am in danger of becoming a stranger to you. As time goes on, it is most essential that I should do all in my power to make my activities a picture you can visualize. Of course in the past, my movements have been, such that I have had to as close as a Sphynx about my commings & goings. To start with you have quite a few pictures of Bombay, so you have some idea what the place is like. I will give you, a day in the life of me.

My bearer, I have a new one, (the last one got the sack for being careless over money matters) comes into my room at about 7-15, it is dark.

My room is thus:



Two rooms the bathroom A & bedroom B, being joined by a door X. Other furniture thus- [room illustration]. Well my bearer comes in & wakes me under mosquito net with a tray, containing one banana & a pot of tea. He fills my bath & then lays out my clothes. I get up wash shave, have a bath, dress & go to the main building next door, my room is on ground floors of annexe & the window falls onto a courtyard. The annexe has a garden full of tropical plants & I go down the garden onto the road & then in next door of similar garden. In the dining room there are five tables along a long room, each table seating about 8 & I am at the second table. There my bearer has laid out my breakfast place as each officer has his own linen & crockery etc. I have my breakfast of eggs or fish, toast & marmalade, & then, walk the mile up to the hospital, with sea on my left & base digs (?) & trees & fields on my right. When I get there I go to the main office, read orders & then walk over to my ward, & read my correspondence which has come in.--bored! I then, do a round of the patients, accompanied by the Sister & the senior orderly, examine patients, prescribe changes of treatment, investigations etc & then I go back to my office & write up my discharges, diet sheets, pathological (?) forms, review admissions, & all sorts of other forms, chits, notes, & so on, which make up a peculiar & exhausting clerical orgy (?), so typical of Army Hospital routine. I, during this time, have a cup of tea made by the Sister. I then see new cases & hey presto, its half past twelve. Then I rush off to catch an ambulance, to drop me off at my hotel. Lunch; lies on the bed & read paper for half an hour & then don my sunglasses, because by this time the light is very strong & walk slowly back to Hospital. In afternoon, there are new cases to see & Medical Boards 3 afternoons / week. Then a cup of tea, I walk home again. Read the evening paper, have a bath. Very often drop in on Davies for a chat, his room is about 30 yards from mine. We talk about, cases & hospital scandal!! & the war news & by that time it is 8-0 PM. Time for my Dinner.

Now I suppose Davies is just a name to you. Well he is a Welsh man, age 32, married, out here 5 months, short, pale, dark with bushy eyebrows, very

cheery bloke, always seeing the funny side of life, laughs often, & laughs often, at everything. We usually go to the pictures together, & walk up to the hospital.

Houston is, in bed with Sciatica, you know him, a dour Scottish man, out here, 20 years. Engineer, and a bachelor, working on Air conditioning for ships, often looks in to see me & we often go out swimming at Luku (?) beach, & ocely (occasionally?) go out into the town to have a Dinner out.

He is a very fit chap usually, but he suddenly go this (??) attack of Lumbago & Sciatica, with terrific xxxs down his leg. It came on in the night, & the pain was so severe, that he was unable to move, & he was in such agonies that he was shouting out for help for about 4 hours & not a soul came to his aid. Now 3 days later, he is able to hobble about a bit. I started this letter when I was orderly officer on Wed, & I have been so busy since, that today Sunday, having an afternoon off is the first time I have had a chance to finish it. I am concentrating on Air letters & airgraphs now. The Airmail, takes so long. I got 1 Air mail letter today 16 weeks to come, Oct 1st. & another from Mother of Oct 30. I shall have to send some Air Mail, to send you photographs, as I have a few more for you now. As you see for these things I am writing as small as I can, & with Airgraphs, as small as I dare, to be sure of them being readable. You darling might make an effort to put a maximum on Airgraphs & air letters. After all, I am putting about 1700 words on these things which is more than you put in Air mail letters. One thing about airgraphs, is that even if they are lost, they are always duplicated, as there is 100% delivery with a delay of 2 or 3 wks when they have been sunk. Its no use me talking about your last letter as it is last Oct (?), much water has flowed under the (through?)bridge since then. I am having a quiet afternoon. I meant to sleep until 4. PM from 2.0 & then write letters but I didn't wake up until twenty to six. The war is very good right now isn't it? Russia is making wonderful progress but I doubt if anything sensational will happen of the great bastions, few have fallen yet. Karkhoff, Kursk, Orell (?), Ryer & Regex (??) is only 60 miles from Moscow! Another point is that the majority of these captured armies are Italians, Rumanians etc & the % of Germans, is still far too small to constitute a major defeat or to make a general collapse likely. As for the difficulties of us invading the Continent or Sardinia or Sicily, the probable casualties & difficulties are so great that it makes me shudder. Another delay,

whenever I sit down to write to you somebody looks in, that was Davies. He has been fifteen minutes & has now gone for his bath. Still darling, when opportunities for companionship & friendship are open, one has to take them. It means that Davies & Houston & Lees, often look into my room for a talk, or we arrange to go to the pictures, & so fill some of what little spare time I have, but I am much happier & the time to our reunion passes much more quickly. There have been times when I have been lonely, & unable to find companions of similar temperaments & tastes, when I have been depressed. Such as the several months in Cairo. There are times, when you find such a spate of people, with similar type, that one begins to wonder, if there is something radically wrong with oneself. It does make one happier when you know that there are several chaps, who, like to look in on you or go out with you to pictures, & Dinner etc. I always say to myself, be as sociable as you can, don't refuse to go out for an evening often, or show by a flicker of an eyelid, if somebody coming in to see you, is inconvenient, as you are reading an interesting book or writing a letter, because next week you may be posted to another part of India, among strangers, people of different tastes & outlook on life, & then you will have plenty of opportunities for reading, & writing every letter & making the best use of your own society. Of course as I get older, I have corrected many of my own faults, in regard to associating with other people. In the past I have been too shy, too reticent, too liable to attacks of depression, & irritability, too liable to see people's faults instead of seeing their good qualities. Particularly in the last thing, I now base my philosophy of life. I say, so & so is a decent chap really. Often when I haven't liked people at first. I have controlled my aversion & studied them & often got to like them more than most.

Cheerio T. A. Give my love to J.F.S.

Your devoted husband.

Kenneth