

EXTRACTS FROM BABU'S LETTERS

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pc/1/7/8-38



Oct. 25, 1927

I will stop now. Drop a line or two when you have time and don't be so sarcastic in your next or I shall squeeze the life out of you in 1929. So don't forget it. Yah! Yours as ever.

7.X.18 / From France

....and what a death for the rabbit afterwards, poisoned by un-cooked and a too plentiful supply of meat.

23.XI.16 France

Am glad to hear you had such a wonderful reception at the station when you returned home. By the way, haven't they got any mirrors in South Africa. If you could borrow one, my dear fellow, one look would be enough and you would be in bed for a week with brain fever.

Aug 4, 1921

Dear JHH, Do you remember seven years ago today? I guess you do. It doesn't seem really seven years, does it, although it must be according to our ages, as I was a boy then 16 years old and you weren't much more, were you?.....Yes, it was rather a grand day in camp, but think what a week would have been like if we could both have managed it.

June 26. Hospital in Scotland

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Antipon which will make you like a lamp post in a week according to the advertisements. Myself, I should advise a little hard work for a change....my moustache is quite alright. When I counted it up the other day, I found there were 13 on one side and 11 on the other.

April 11, 1920. Oxford

Oh no, I am not trying to get out of that wrestling match. Far from it. I am only trying to spare you the humiliation of being stood on your head before a crowd which couldn't occur in a boxing ~~match~~ bout. Now wait and see and don't let your muscles get soft and flabby lounging about in that easy chair with your feet on the mantleshelf.....Yes, I remember the meeting at Weston when you wanted (oh so badly) a shave.

B.E.F. France 14.1.17

By the time I come to visit you you will no doubt be an old man, or at least getting old and fast losing your mighty strength and then I shall be able to break you like a reed. Now of course your girth prevents me doing this.

Birmingham 9.2.20

Do you remember the day we took a trip on the upper river and you taught me that pathetic old Irish ballad, "Mush, Mush". That was a year or two ago, wasn't it?So flying trips have been going

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✓ 1917

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strong in your part of the world, have they? Of course you would require a Handley Page machine to take you up, wouldn't you? Oh yes, you would be quite safe - they will lift about 3 tons I believe

Birmingham, Sep 23. 1919.
Town Hall, Johannesburg, Tonight at 8 p.m. Great Wrestling Bout, 16 st Prime Minister of S.A. versus 9 st. Champion of State Railways for championship of the Empire. Come in your millions

7.3.18 France (King was now in a Labour Battalion)
Your rather personal remarks about my present occupation being the one for which I am most suited have fallen rather flat, because I am not sweeping roads at all now sir, so put that in your old clay and smoke it. I should also like to remark that your own wonderful beauty would be greatly improved upon if a scraper were drawn across it once or twice. Yes, I am still a smoker and on a much bigger scale than I used to be. As for your Boer tobacco, I only told you at the time it was very good because I didn't want to offend you, but it was the most horrible tongue-stinging, head-splitting, pipe-spoiling and match-wasting concoction I have ever smoked so there.... Well illustrious one and Star of Beauty may your smile never fade, likewise your cor- but I shall not mention that or I shall "cap put" next time you write.

27.1.19 France
Yes, it would be alright to go up the upper river in a canoe not to mention "Mush Mush" which I sing now and again still. Would the Town Hall be big enough or should we have hired the Albert Hall for our great contest?

29.1.23 Oxford
Hope to see you sometime this year anyway, if you do come we will have a trip up the river if it is only for one night.....Oh yes I will take your photo alright even though the camera may have to be armour-plated.

23.XI.16 France two
My dear JHH In front of me I have your letters and will now endeavour to stay your thirst for literature if possible.

B.E.F. 8.XI.17
You see my arm is useless for handling a rifle any more so I have been sent to a Labour Company.

B.E.F. 17.XI.17
You will see by the address that I am no longer a fighting man but have changed the rifle for a mud scraper. No doubt you will have something "sarky" to say about this but never mind - you just wait till I have the pleasure of meeting you again on the mat for preference, then you will see.....I think myself that a more suitable inscription would be "JHH This corpulent Boer has now no more. He died of hard work which he did not shirk."

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ALAN PATON
CENTRE
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9.5.17 Hospital, Scotland.

I do wish we could get on the mat again. Just 15 minutes and I would show you what I would do with my one sound arm. When you read this you will no doubt shiver with fear and a cold sweat will break out on your noble brow.

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4.12.24 Oxford

It is very funny but my machine is an Empire too and I endorse all you say about them being very strong....I apologise for putting $\frac{3}{4}$ after your name, which, being noticed, speaks well for your eyesight. But of course ~~ixxxxx~~ had I wanted to describe you in figures I should naturally have put 11 (double one) or X (the unknown quantity) (or should I say quality?).....Did I tell you that my holidays are fixed for August 4, and so if Dr. Collier and company run a Wytham camp, I shall be there at the same time and no doubt things will move somewhat rapidly in the way of midnight raids and such like. Wish you could be there on my side though, not in the enemy's camp

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8.9.24 Oxford

So you are still "Hon" and hope to get over next year perhaps. Well if you do come over will you be able to come camping up the river for a week-end or a whole week? (He then tells H. about the holiday camp of some ten days which he says was perfect).

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6.10.21 Oxford (After H's visit)

I have received a copy of our photo and I told A.J. to send you one and he said he would. You may have received it by now. As I expected, the thing was a complete failure and I always look divine taken alone.

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2.2.24 Oxford (Note that H. had sent the University Supplement in the R.D.M.)

So you had anticipated me in ~~the~~ typewriter affair. But the wonder to me is that you do not claim to be the fastest typist in SA or something like that. P.S. Have you still got old bone-shaker that you dashed over to Bicester on one fine day? I passed through there a week yesterday and saw the old tea-shop where you and Private A.E. King had tea. Quite a lot of water has flowed under Folly Bridge since then. It is nice to remember these old incidents, isn't it. Cheerio B.

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4.6.23 Cardiff

Fancy you still putting on weight still, well look here, I have informed my manager that unless ~~that unless~~ you make the weight agreed to for our last contest, that is, 16 st, I shall refuse to wrestle. P.S. They will call us figure 10 when we go round to the club if you are not careful with the sugar, etc. (Note: King has given arms and legs to the one and naught.)

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4.8.17 In Camp, Northumberland.

I received a letter from Haig the other day begging me to come back and take charge again. So I had to send him out a plan of campaign for the last push in Flanders. (Again says he will wrestle HOFFIE with one arm.)

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1.9.20 Oxford.

I hope all your planning will bear fruit next year as I am eager to hear you sing "Mush, Mush" again. (Again discusses the wrestling match).

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4.5.22 Oxford

Sorry that the fine photos I enclosed should arouse such jealousy. That is the worst of being so handsome.....See you have altered the name of your College again, and a proper tongue-twister this time too.

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10.5.19 Oxford

The poem will come too one day, but like all great poets, I wait for an inspiration before I attempt anything. Of course when it does come it will turn poor old Rudyard Kipling grey-headed with ~~my~~ envy.

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17.12.21 Oxford (H. had written to King in the train)

It was quite easy to read every word of yours because really speaking you write as though you are always in the railway train.

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31.3.23. Oxford

As regards me getting a move on in that direction, i.e. marriage, there is plenty of time yet as I am like you only a mere boy yet..... as for you, you old scamp, you should get married first to set me a good example. (King discusses Union politics). No doubt you would like to see one of my masterpieces (?) of portrait painting. As regards what happens to them when finished they are "hung" of course. If you submit yourself to my skill (?) it is quite probable the original will get "hung" and not the picture when anyone saw it.

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7.6.25 Oxford

Dear JHH, I am writing this after a perfect week of sunshine. The country is in all its glory and I only wish we could have had a camp just now.....I am getting first year driver's pay NOW, but that comes automatically after ten years as fireman, WHETHER YOU ARE MADE DRIVER OR NOT. I may not be passed as a driver for two or three years yet and then it will be a long time before I am a passenger driver. Now do you comprez?.....A few weeks ago we went up to the Zoo and spent a very interesting day and got wet through coming back. THEY DID NOT KEEP ME you see. P.S. H.A. Secretan sent me a cutting of that cartoon where you are like Buddha. Ha!ha!ha!ha!ha!ha!ha!! Case of keep smiling, eh?

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28.3.19 Oxford

On Monday next I start work on the railway but not as you suppose sweeping out carriages, as I am NOT a carriage cleaner but an engine

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cleaner and now I shall very soon be a fireman if my old game arm doesn't stop me, and the pay is much better now, you know, Cleaners are getting £2.5. a week now.

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17.6.18 B.E.F.

I suppose you are working as hard as ever. Mr. Secretan says he is up to the eyes in work, so I told him he ~~must~~ be standing on his head.

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8.11.23 Oxford

As for that kitten, wait till I see you again. I will give you Babu I wouldn't mind if it had been a dog, but a CAT. Lord help you when I get my hands on you. (H. had written to King to tell him he had called his kitten "Babu*the Second".)

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6.7.22 Oxford

You mustn't worry because whenever you come here again I can easily pack up my tent and go out for a weekend with you.

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16.9.22 Oxford

Next time you come over we must try and arrange a weekend camp at least. You mustn't expect me to ever become G.M. of the G.W.R. because they don't draw General Managers from the Locomotive Dept..... the highest possible I am likely to obtain is foreman over some loco runningshed.

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8.1.21. Oxford

Oh yes, I shall value the privilege of seeing you again very highly indeed, but don't forget to get quite fit for the wrestling match as I do not wish to take part in a one-sided affair.

1926

3.12.26 Oxford

You ~~must~~ be pleased to hear that MY Boys' Club is going strong. We are about 18 - 20 in number now, and have got a football team going (Ends with sketch of David and Goliath).

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11.1.25 Oxford

(Ends with sketch - "The Administrator at Work")

1926

16.5.26 Oxford

My little tent is still doing good service as a cycle shed and with a coat of linseed oil will serve well for many a camp yet.....so hurry up.....and fly over for the summer.....of course I can understand YOU still being unable to find a wife but of course with HAS and myself the reverse is the case; we go through leap year in dread of a repetition of previous experiences; i.e. thousands of letters and telegrams and photos etc., etc from our thousands of heart-broken admirers.

1926

23.2.26 Oxford

Dr. Collier was married last Saturday.....no doubt we shall soon hear similar news from SA (Pretoria) like this: Stop Press. SOLD

Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr to Louisa Imagina Tion, only daughter of etc., etc. Violets. No mourning. Reception at Restaurant Delnevo R.I.P.

✓ 30.3.25 Oxford

(Explains to H. that he will probably not be a driver for another ten to fifteen years).

(24) 5.11.24 Oxford

I think I told you before when I sent some photos of a previous camp that I did all the work myself and when you come over again YOU HAVE GOT TO STOP AT THIS HOUSE FOR TWO OR THREE HOURS not Minutes then. I have albums full of snaps to show you.

[27] 8.2.27 Oxford

You are an artful rogue trying to make out that you do not know what that sketch was supposed to show. David's hair is standing on end through sheer electrical energy and the guy on the floor is supposed to be a well-known S.A. Administrator. Ha! Ha!

[27] 19.6.27 Oxford

My little tent has about done its day and I shall have to get another one and a bigger one this time. My only regret is that I think a bigger tent I shall be unable to catch you a hefty kick as you dive into cover every time.....H.A.S. didn't stop here long....but no doubt when he gets me in private he will disclose the innermost secrets of your Jekyll and Hyde existence.....I shall look forward to your visit in 1929 anyway and we will try to arrange a few days in Beaver Camp in the Big Bend country near Wytham.....But why feel old? Life is not measured by years or seconds on a dial.

[27] 19.4.27 Oxford

Dear JHH, Got your jealous fault-finding letter alright. Of course if you have never ridden a fast motor cycle you would naturally be jealous at seeing such a calm, bold, icy-nerved man on a motor cycle. Only old fogeys drive about in mobile bedrooms anyway. (King also tells H. that Secretan said "that JHH wasn't half a big bug, what with special coaches, etc., etc).

17.1.28 Oxford

(King is Hon. Sec. of Commercial Road Boys' Club. Acknowledges receipt of 2/6 from JHH as annual subscription).

[28] 15.1.28 Oxford

(Very serious beginning) Dear JHH, Many thanks for your letter which I didn't notice getting overdue. Pleased to know that you are still smiling and that my poor efforts at trying to cheer you up are not entirely wasted. I am a poor letter-writer really being much too cautious and reserved, on paper at least. to give any more than a faint idea of the undercurrents of life. Of course you may be able by this time to read between the lines a little.....Of course naturally I hope you will be able to get over this year instead of next

seeing that the sooner you come the less weight I shall have to throw to the ground (poor ground). Joking aside, it would be a treat to get you over earlier than I expected and I hope to be able to get the whole Club to come up for a weekend with you. That would be fine, wouldn't it, and we shall have a real good time. I am having the canoe specially strengthened and we can glide up and down the pleasant upper reaches of the Thames to our hearts' content. Wytham always seems so far away from everywhere although one can see the railway in the distance. While I am up there I have no newspapers at all and it is very nice and quiet and lonely and restful. Of course when the boys come up they liven things up slightly, but, even then, they are all in shorts and half naked, not a bit like civilised beings, and so for the time one is quite cut off from the stress and toil of modern life. I hope I have not said anything that will make you throw up your post immediately and sail for England. In case I have, I will quieten your zeal with a little about the awful weather we have had this winter. (King sent H. a pencil portrait of self and some etchings).

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26.3.28 Oxford

We will certainly go camping out when you arrive whatever the weather. Nothing to my mind is nicer than to lie in warm blankets and hear the rain pattering on the canvas (and to know that next you lies a great big strong hefty "guest" who has got to get out in the morning and light the fire. Ha! Ha!)

13.X.16 ~~XXXXXX~~ B.E.F.

That incident to which you refer, viz, depositing me on my back in the gym, never would happen, and certainly never will, because you would now be like butter in my hands, so take warning TYRANT and SWANKER.

1.X.29 Oxford

Dear J (I refuse to write three letters and dots any longer) So pleased to get your letter. Glad you weren't jealous because I had got a new car and you had to stick to old (very old) Marjory. (By now H. had visited England and had written to King twitting him that the wrestling match never took place) Re the neglected wrestling match at camp, did you really expect me to catch hold of you my guest and calmly throw you into the stream a mangled corpse.....And now I must close. Hope I have not overdone the sarcasm. If I have, please forgive me for I am in a jolly mood.

21.1.30 Oxford

If you make no more of a maiden speech than you do your maiden bat at cricket, then the Lord help South Africa, and especially those poor deluded electors, the mutts. Why not go in fancy dress. It would certainly create a stir, and you could then recite that famous old ballad, "There was an old man of the Cape, Who had a face like an ape, When they all shouted "Hof", He broke down in a cough, (A prize will be offered for the last line).

10.6.30 Oxford

(All letters now addressed "Dear J". Tells H. of a glorious Whit-sun weekend at Wytham).

19.8.30 Oxford

Joking aside, your letter teems with joy and life and speaks well for the benefit you got from your holiday. You even aspire, for the umpteenth time, to challenge my unasailable position on the pinnacle of strength, wit, beauty, and all other manly ideals.....I am sorry that you have broken the tradition of the ages by not naming your new car after a lady. Every engine and machine yet fashioned so admirably portrays the usual familiar traits of coyness, unreliability, and stubbornness, aligned to sweetness, cooing and devotion, that it is sheer wickedness to call a divine motor "Algy".....I am considering your suggestion about calling my Singer "Melba".... you call it a book, so I take it that it is not one of Benn's excellent little 6d series. However, I shall look forward to it with interest. You didn't tell me the title, and what is more important, the price. I suggest for the former, "My Country" and for the latter twelve monthly payments of a farthing.

29.X.31 Oxford

Pray do not apologise for the poor quality of your letter. I am used to it by now and I am afraid that you must have been a little seedy as it was less abusive than usual. (The letters of this period certainly changed in character).

26.X.35 Oxford

(King writes no longer from 15 Norfolk Street, but from Red Bay, Botley Road, Oxford) Morris Jacks used to say that he would just as soon live in Bloody Square, Moscow.

24.4.36 OXFORD

I return the compliment about liking to hear from old friends. On my part I am always glad to see the familiar writing and eager not to let a day pass without replying. Although the bonds are no stronger than a scrap of paper, I am sure that they are very deep and sincere. In other words, it gives me pleasure to feel that we both could call upon each other's services to one hundred per cent..... Keep smiling and keep your back warm. Of course what you really need for this is a wife; but a body-belt would probably be as effective and much less expensive.

14.6.36 OXFORD

I have been bathing several times lately, trying to teach John to swim, as we don't want him to have to learn when he grows up like we did.

22.7.36 Oxford

(King very busy with F.E.M.I.C.) You will be excited about India, I guess, and riding about in a hoodah, surrounded by dancing girls and slaves, will banish your kidney trouble for ever.....But I nearly

forgot to tell you that one of my girl chums has just been married in Durban.....I got a piece of wedding cake, and, for a moment, my heart missed a beat; I thought it was from you.

15.9.36 Oxford

Our movement now boasts 72 classes with a membership of 4500 men..... Glad you enjoyed your usual camp holiday. I think that, like me, you are at heart a teacher and are always happy amongst youngsters.

27.1.37 Oxford

So I look like being forced, (not against my will though) to start the old camping stunts again. This will bring me in fine fettle for your proposed weekend in 1939.

9.XI.38 Oxford

That is one bad point about Wytham. It is too near home; very useful when getting all the gear there but relations drop in very frequently. However I am still master enough of my own camp to have them just when it suits and your presence should go far to keep any lovely ladies away.....(King has given up Federation Secretaryship) during which time he has gathered in 136 depots and over ten thousand members. He is reading Capt Scott's 'Last Expedition'. He notes that H. intends doing a lot of serious writing.)M.L.J. is pretty busy teaching teachers but he likes to hear from we old boys now and again, they teach him what he teaches to teachers.....Trust your health and spirits are as boyant as ever.

5.12.38 Oxford

(Encloses cutting which describes King as one of the most outstanding exhibitors at the Annual Exhibition of the G.W.R. Art Exhibition at Paddington. King writes that he won a silver medal. King closes, "When in doubt, read Emerson's Essays".)

Boxing Day, 1938 Oxford

(Acknowledges receipt of H.'s photo) you have certainly well-proportioned feet and well-developed legs; your waist and chest in reverse as in many men your age; in fact right up to the neck everything appears first rate, my dear sir. I will show it to the boys and they will realise that a real tough guy will be in camp next year (we hope)I have sent another two pictures to Australia, (that makes five out there) so that is one advantage of giving them away, they do get into folks' homes.....you will agree that few things give such a feeling of culture to any home (and its occupiers) as pictures and books; books being the SOUL of a home and pictures the HEART. (King remembers that H. taught him chess).

23.2.39 Oxford

(King to start flying lessons).

Good Friday Eve 1939 Oxford

Regarding marriage, I expect you are like me in being too hard up to afford it; too much of an idealist to pick a lady and too artful

(or wise) to have to give up little luxuries which we would have to deny ourselves in Holy Matrimony; then your dear mother is matched by my dear sister and we have most of the comfort and peace a woman can provide without having to ~~in make~~ take that step which allows no retrace.

12.5.39 Oxford

(King has secured a licence).

16.6.39 Oxford

Thanks for your letter of 4th. Glad you are still smiling and I should certainly do nothing to reduce your weight unnaturally, in spite of all the doctor says. You have a tremendous frame to stand the weight, and I never think of you as being really a FAT man, although I have pulled your leg unbearably at times over it.....as long as you feel fit and well what else matters.....(King is now Unit Leader in the Civil Air Guard).

4.8.39 Oxford

The new tent is superb, in fact we two were lost in it. We had one or two canoe trips, not far. and mainly fetching wood for the camp fire. It was very quiet up there and we were the only campers; our most persistent neighbours being four ducks and Mr. and Mrs. Swan and their cygnets; the father swan fed from my hand but mother was very hissy and suspicious.....(King is glad to hear that H. is taking his advice and not worrying about the plumpness.)

30.9.39 Oxford

And what a baby I must have appeared to you when you came to see me at Bicester.

23.XI.39 Oxford

Did I tell you that Sir Felix had sent Capt. Blunt to see my pictures.....I was going to ask you to call your new car Marion (it is probably far too suggestive).

23.1.40 Oxford

I note with pleasure your adding up of the years we have been writing to each other ever since you came over to Bicester on that awful old bike..... (King is reading Goethe).

5.5.40 Oxford

Thanks for your letter of 19th March. Your prophecies are hanging fire still.....I have been writing for two hours now.....and am now going below to make some coffee; but I will stay with you long enough to write out a little verse I discovered recently in the Children's Encyclopedia" "Sometimes" by Thomas S. Jones:

Amongst the fields of yesterday
He sometimes comes to me;
A little lad just back from play
The lad I used to be.

"And yet he smiles so wistfully
Once he has crept within;
I wonder if he hopes to see
The man he might have been?"

Best wishes, regards, and kindest thoughts. Babu

25.7.40 Oxford

(From now on he writes to "Dear Jan". He is reading Conrad's Lord Jim.)

25.9.40

(King sends snap of Marion the little girl after whom H's car is named).

20.11.42

Some weeks ago I rode across to Bablock Hythe from here and then right round the river bank back again.....the real base of this loop is between Abingdon and New Bridge. After the war when you come over, we must try to do a canoe trip around this bit of river. It is probably too long for a day but we would have to take a tent or just blankets if the weather was good and sleep under the boat..... We could arrange a second canoeful of company (to race, chaff, for cooks, orderlies, etc., instead of you, if desired and probably I would be captain of one boat and you the other)....good for you. We have both learnt to swim since.

20.4.44

(King reminds H. again about Bicester and Weston-super-Mer). I will go forward with the arrangements for Wytham camp in 1947.....You and I seem to be too loyal to home ties and too much of idealists to get married, probably a little too cautious as well. But you are still only comparatively young and very desirable to some S.A. belles and widows (Beware of widows). I am looking to you to set a lead, being the elder, and I will consider flying to S.A. to act as best man (if you will forward the necessary fare!)

17.8.44

(King took five books for five hours of Ack-Ack duty - Oxford Book of English Verse: Oxford Book of English Prose: Carlyle's Essays: Ruskin's Sesame and the Lilies: Wilde's De Profundis.)

10.11.44

Last Saturday I went to Bicester twice. I expect that will remind you of the last war when you visited a young British soldier in camp and took him out to tea.

9.3.45

I now drive trains in and out of Paddington to Hereford, Birmingham, etc., and have been once to Southampton. So there is still a probability of your riding behind me when you visit us next year. We might get Sir Felix to wangle you a ride on the engine, who knows?A large green tent still awaits you under the floor ready for

your camping holiday, and we shall doubtless find a canoe somewhere around Medley and you can still sing "Mush Mush" while I do the paddling.

15.9.45

Yes, it is a pity the weather will probably not permit even a couple of hours on the river (singing "Mush Mush") but never is a long day and that will come in time.

13.11.45

Trust you got back safely and felt refreshed for your holiday. We had about 170 visitors to our show and ten new members enrolled, so it was quite a good mile-stone, and I think your being there helped (attracted the ladies) (I have had 37 requests for your photo and 84 for your address but of course I haven't let on.)

8.1.46

Yes, I am busy making pottery from Shawley clay, and what with this and the O.F.A.S it takes a great deal of my time and after all it is probably the greatest need of the world; a new vision of Beauty and Truth through Arts and Crafts activities in a more Christlike atmosphere of brotherhood; a new appreciation of the mighty works of the Past and the creative hope of the Future and Eternity.

2.10.46

"That Gen. Smuts take a well-earned ~~holiday~~ retirement" is a motion I table for the next meeting of your House of Representatives. That he also takes up painting like Churchill is a motion from the OFAS Secretary, Treasurer and Editor, Printer, etc.

18.12.46

You MUST cast aside politics for one weekend when you do come over and we will try to get a party together.....We have noted the preparations for the Royal Visit to SA and no doubt you will be created a Lord High Everything or be given the Order of the Garter (outside) during the tour.....Glad Marion is still going strong. The real Marion is gem like but it is rather sad that she is too old to kiss now (except under the mistletoe at Xmas of course).....Of course I still keep making friends. The latest is a young Welsh fireman who I had to pick up off the railways as he had fallen off the platform in the blackest night possible; thanks to my practice in trying to lift a certain young SA Collegian off his feet, I was well able to lift Gareth Thomas into safety, and it is natural to grow fond of anybody we help; especially when one is a ~~XXXXXXX~~ bachelor and believes he owns everybody's children.

22.4.47

(Asks H. to read "The Cricket Match")

13.6.47

I knew you would be pleased and proud to think that your name had not been forgotten in St Ebbes and you would have been proud to have seen the window full of silver cups and medals that the B.B. Club had won during the current season..... (King has just met Fred Slatter, and here is Slatter's tale censored of course:- We was in the old bashing room with a football when that South African toff, what was his name, Hofmeyr, wasn't it, poked his head round the door and bash - the ball caught him straight in the bloody clock! That done it. "If you wants a rough house, you can have it," he said, and then the fun started. In the finish the Rev. Harboard from ~~ac~~ across the street came to see what the noise was,)

NOTE: Engine-driver Albert King gave a non-sale exhibition of his paintings Saturday Feb 12 to Monday Feb 14.

8.X.47

During the last two years I have taught myself another trade without realising it, pottery, and they asked me to go to the School of Art two evening a week at 6/- an hour; very good pay that; with a probable fulltime job for next year; so I had to find a job where I could get to these classes regularly; my main job now is a hospital porter at the Ackland Nursing Home.....The Staff is nearly all women of course, while at school there are seventy students in the pottery classes, nearly all women; so I am surrounded with them and of course I get on very well with them; being a good teacher and not making favourites or flirting; thanks to my Balliol Club training!

27.5.48

(Talking of hospitals and nurses King writes:) In fact I am rather TOO friendly with two or three and feel sometimes that my bachelor status is resting on a too fragile foundation like a curate among the maiden ladies of the parish! Of course I DO go out of my way sometimes to make their arduous jobs a little easier.....So that their reactions to my daily good deeds are mistaken by an amorous old bachelor like myself for deeper feelings.....But still you must keep your eye on me (like I have on you all these years).

17.7.48

Actually I DO miss the nurses; they were an inspiration every minute of every day, and some were favourites of course. I have been back to see them once or twice.....so I am not cut off as you might jealously think!So you got chucked out, but it will do you good as a Party and give you a rest meanwhile.....I forgot to say that I have arranged to take one nurse out for a canoe trip! So when you DO come over you will probably have to put up with female company; I suggest TWO canoes and TWO nurses; but I suppose anything below a matron would be below your dignity.

20.9.48

(King is now at the Art School) Of course I am not getting the wage I got on the railway, but as I get such easy conditions and such short hours I don't really earn them; in fact it is as if I retired at 50 and took on a light job.....And now I will stop. Trusting this finds you as well as ever and in as good spirits as ever..... There are other jobs waiting; it is nice to be busy as you know. I am very grateful for my health and the fine interests life has unfolded for me, in short I suppose I am a contented mortal, which is saying a lot perhaps. Kindest thoughts, Babu.

NOTE: There were 126 letters altogether. Babu's early Oxford address was 15 Norfolk Street.