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THE SAHIBS

THE SAHIBS

*The Life and Ways of the British in India
as Recorded by Themselves*

Edited by
HILTON BROWN



WILLIAM HODGE & COMPANY LIMITED
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

First Published 1948

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY EBENEZER BAYUS AND SON, LTD., THE
TRINITY PRESS, WORCESTER, AND LONDON

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The business of an anthologist is to pick flowers, not to prate about them. I have therefore cut down my own comment in this book to what seems—to me at least, as I hope it will to others—a minimum. It is printed in italics.

I must take space here, however, to express thanks; first to Mr Sutton, the Librarian at the India Office, and his staff for unlimited kindness and help; second, to Miss Priscilla Hale for her secretarial work; and third, to Dennis Kincaid's book *British Social Life in India*, which provides the ideal runway for all who seek to take off into this particular air.

HILTON BROWN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Editor gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to O. Douglas for permission to include extracts from her book *Olivia in India*, and he has to thank Messrs. Poore Ltd., for allowing him to quote from *The Memoirs of William Hickey*. His thanks are also due to the following publishers for permission to include extracts from the books enumerated hereunder:

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FRONTISPIECE

What varied opinions we constantly hear
Of our rich, Oriental possessions;
What a jumble of notions, distorted and queer,
Form an Englishman's "Indian impressions"!

First a sun, fierce and glaring, that scorches and bakes;
Palankeens, perspiration, and worry;
Mosquitoes, thugs, cocoanuts, Brahmins, and snakes,
With elephants, tigers and curry.

Then Juggernat, punkahs, tanks, buffaloes, forts,
With bangles, mosques, nautches, and dhingees;
A mixture of temples, Mahometans, ghats,
With scorpions, Hindoos, and Feringhees.

Then jungles, fakeers, dancing-girls, prickly heat,
Shawls, idols, durbars, brandy-pawny;
Rupees, clever jugglers, dust-storms, slipper'd feet,
Rainy season, and mulligatawny.

Hot winds, holy monkeys, tall minarets, rice
With crocodiles, ryots, or farmers;
Himalayas, fat baboos, with paunches and pice,
So airily clad in pyjamas.

With Rajahs—But stop, I must really desist,
And let each one enjoy his opinions,
Whilst I show in what style Anglo-Indians exist
In Her Majesty's Eastern dominions.

Curry and Rice (1859)

PART ONE
THE STAGE

1 - THE VERY EARLY DAYS

On the last day of the year of grace 1600 a Royal Chatter of Queen Elizabeth incorporated the British East India Company under the title of " The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, trading into the East Indies"^{9*}. If this was the actual dawn, I suppose the " Very Early Days " might be taken as covering the entire epoch of a hundred and fifty-seven years up to the Battle of Plassey. The favour—and the remarkable foresight—of Charles II had enabled the Company to conduct itself along lines much wider and more imposing than those of a "Company of Merchants Trading"; by the latter half of the seventeenth century it was already something in the nature of what we should now call a Chartered Corporation. But with Plassey its conquests became altogether too spectacular and the Government at home embarked on the first steps towards that control which it was fully to assume in 1858. Plassey therefore does seem to terminate an epoch. But for purposes of this section I have taken the "Very Early Days" as covering only the first century of the Company's career; that is, the seventeenth century of our era, a period when conditions were more or less static and to which the adjective "primitive" may consistently be applied.

The House the *English* live in at Surat, is partly the King's Gift, partly hired; Built of Stone and excellent Timber, with good Carving, without Representations; very strong, for that each Floor is Half a Yard thick at least, of the best plastered Cement, which is very weighty. It is contrived after the *Moor's* Buildings, with upper and lower Galleries, or Terras-walks; a neat Oratory, a convenient open Place for Meals. The President has spacious Lodgings, noble Rooms for Counsel and Entertainment, pleasant Tanks, Yards, and an Hummum to Wash in; but no Gardens in the City, or very few, though without they have many, like Wildernesses, overspread with Trees. The *English* had a neat one, but *Seva Gi's* coming, destroyed it: It is known, as the other Factories are, by their several Flags flying.

Here they live (in Shipping-time) in a continual hurly-burly, the *Banyans* presenting themselves from the hour of Ten till

Noon; and then Afternoon at Four till Night, as if it were an Exchange in every Row; below stairs, the Packers and Warehouse-keepers, together with Merchants bringing and receiving Musters, make a meer *Billingsgate*; for if you make not a Noise, they hardly think you intent on what you are doing.

Among the *English*, the Business is distributed into four Offices; the Accomptant, who is next in Dignity to the President, the general Accompts of all *India*, as well as this place, passing through this hands; he is *Quasi* Treasurer, signing all things, though the Broker keep the Cash. Next him is the Warehouse-keeper, who Registers all *Europe* Goods Vended, and receives all *Eastern* Commodities Bought; under him is the Purser Marine, who gives Account of all Goods Exported and Imported, pays Seamen their Wages, provides Waggons and Porters, looks after Tackling for Ships, and Ships Stores. Last of all is the Secretary, who models all Consultations, writes all letters, carries them to the President and Council to be perused and signed; keeps the Company's Seal, which is affixed to all Passes and Commissions; records all Transactions, and sends Copies of them to the Company; though none of these, without the President's Approbation, can act or do any thing. The Affairs of *India* are solely under his Regulation; from him issue out all Orders, by him all Preferment is disposed; by which means the Council are biassed by his Arbitrament.

FRYER (1673)

*

The whole Mass of the Company's Servants may be comprehended in these Classes, viz. Merchants, Factors, and Writers; some Blewcoat Boys also have been entertained under Notion of Apprentices for Seven Years, which being expired, if they can get Security, they are capable of Employments. The Writers are obliged to serve Five Years for 10 /. *per Ann.* giving in Bond of 500 /. for good Behaviour, all which time they serve under some of the fore-mentioned Offices: After which they commence Factors, and rise to Preferment and Trust, according to Seniority or Favour, and therefore have a 1000 /. Bond exacted from them, and have their Salary augmented to 20 /. *per Ann.* for Three Years, then entring into new Indentures, are made Senior

Factors; and lastly, Merchants after Three Years more; out of whom are chose Chiefs of Factories, as Places fall, and are allowed 40 /. *per Ann.* during their stay in the Company's service, besides Lodgings and Victuals at the Company's Charges.

FRYER (1673)

*

Brightly before the imagination rises up the Fort of St. George and the straggling town of Madraspatanam, under the presidency of the Honorable Sir William Langhorne, Baronet, in the middle of the reign of merry king Charles. The same surf is rolling heavily upon the beach, and almost the same naked boatmen are labouring at the oar, amidst the deafening cling-clang of some old Tamil refrain; but only two, or perhaps three old fashioned ships, are lying in the roads, with old fashioned cannon peeping from their decks, and a still stranger old fashioned crew dropping the anchor or taking in the sails. We will suppose them to be new arrivals from England, and that all is bustle and excitement. The sun is just rising over the bay of Bengal, and flashing its early rays over the dark blue billows. Two or three sedate members of council have just taken their morning draught, according to the fashion of the time, and are being pushed off from the beach. They are arrayed in their best Sunday attire of gay doublets and enormous hose, and are endeavouring to assume courtly airs, which sit but ungainly on those rough and unpolished traders. Beside them is seated the Captain of the little garrison. in his best uniform, somewhat the worse for wear, and stained may be with spots that might have been blood, but are far more likely to have been the droppings from a flask of red wine. He too is brushed and buckled as if for parade, and carries as swaggering an air as a man may do who is being tossed and rolled about by a stiff Coromandel surf. All seems to betoken the arrival of some extraordinary person or personages, who must be welcomed with unusual pomp to the Factory in Fort St. George.

TALBOYS WHEELER

A strange old fort it (Fort St. George.) was even to the English gentlewomen of that time; but it would seem more strange to us; whilst our extensive buildings would have seemed stranger still to that simple minded generation. There was the Warehouse piled high with goods of all descriptions; some which seemed fresh from Aldersgate Street or the Cheap; others—silks, muslins, coloured calicoes, and other choice articles—which had been brought from mysterious towns far inland. Then there was the little Chapel, where every man in the Agency, from the youngest Apprentice up to the Honorable Governor himself, was compelled to attend the daily reading of Morning and Evening Prayers, besides two sermons on Sundays, and something extra on Wednesdays. There was the Refection Room, where all the members of the Agency took their dinners and supper at times which very nearly corresponded to our tiffins and dinners; and where on certain afternoons in the week the younger men were taught some one or other of the languages of the country, being stimulated there-unto by the promise of large rewards for proficiency—twenty pounds being given for the knowledge of an Indian language, and ten pounds for a knowledge of Persian. There was the School room where all the children of the soldiers, and others were taught to read and cypher, and above all were imbued with the principles of the Protestant religion; and be it told to the credit of the merchants of London in the godless reign of king Charles, that they constantly sent over supplies of Bibles and Catechisms for the use of this school, and directed that "when any shall be able to repeat the Catechisms by heart, you may give to each of them two rupees for their encouragement."

TALBOYS WHEELER

*

Thursday November 16th, 1786

These were rosy beginnings; that there was another side to the picture may be gathered from the contribution of a correspondent to the *Calcutta Gazette* of November 1786, dealing with this same Fort St George in the early part of the eighteenth century. According to him, the muster roll showed 300 Europeans, but

of these 23 were "Portugese Sentinels, vagabond deserters from the Military and Ships at Goa, the worst men in the world". 34 were in hospital as per Surgeon's monthly report of 1st. September 1746 and 32 more "ought to have been there, old men and boys". This left 200 including 3 Lieutenants and 7 Ensigns but one of the Lieutenants was "an ignorant superannuated Swede"; the second had "many amiable qualities" but had seen no service but "peacable parades"; the third was a Swiss but "as brave a one, I believe, as any of his nation, of great honour". The Ensigns also were a very mixed bag; and were newly risen from the ranks; the Officers themselves had the poorest opinion of their Sergeants and Corporals; while the "Topasses" of whom the major part of the garrison consisted "everyone that knows Madras, knows to be a black, degenerate, wretched race of the ancient Portugese, as proud and bigotted as their ancestors, lazy idle and vicious withal and for the most part as weak and feeble in body as base in mind. Not one in ten possessed of any of the necessary requisites for a soldier."

The population of the Factories in the Very Early Days was—so far as Europeans were concerned—almost exclusively male; but about 1670 an attempt was made by the Directors at home to provide English wives. Here is some account of the arrival in India of these hopeful virgins.

Thus it was that three or four English ladies first arrived in Madras; plain honest women enough, and no doubt tolerably educated for those times, when the Protestant Manual and the Housekeeper's receipts book were the principal subjects of study. Seven or eight months had probably passed away since they had been wished "God speed" by the worthy gentlemen of the Court of Directors, and had fairly set sail down the silver Thames, for the hot country of Indians and idolaters. Poor souls! they must have had strange thoughts as they gazed out from the anchorage, and pondered upon the curious world they were soon to enter. But stranger still they must have felt, when the two members of Council, and the Captain of the garrison, climbed up the sides of the ship and welcomed them to Madraspatanam. But upon this part of the picture we need not dwell, but will simply imagine them to have been carried over the surf with many displays of gallantry, and finally landed in safety upon the beach

in front of Fort St. George. . . . There is nothing further about them in the Records, saving that some years afterwards, two of them still remained unmarried, and were living in the Fort on a small allowance granted by the Company. Thus we can only infer that the connubial speculation had failed.

TALBOYS WHEELER

*

A Modish Garb and Mien is all that is expected from any Women that pass thither, who are many times match'd to the chief Merchants upon the place, and advance thereby their Conditions to a very happy pitch. And considering what trouble attends the Passage, especially of Women, considering the Hazard, as well as length of the Voyage, with some other Casualties that sometimes happen on Board, a modest Woman may very well expect, without any great Stock of Honour or Wealth, a Husband of Repute and Riches there, after she has run all this Danger and Trouble for him. And indeed the fond Indulgence of the Husbands, as well their Wealth, is another valuable Recompense to Women for the Toil and Trouble of the Voyage.

OVINGTON (circ. 1690)

Viewed against the unexplored immensities of India, these Very Early communities were pitifully small. A list of "Freemen" at Fort St George {Madras} in 1678-79 cites sixteen men and five unmarried women; of the men only six were married [only three of them to Englishwomen] and of the "unmarried" women three were widows. A fuller list of 1699, dealing with the entire Coromandel Coast, shows forty-six "Company's Servants", thirty-five "Freemen" and a floating population of thirty-eight "Seafaring men". There were seventy-one women of whom twelve were English, in addition to fourteen wives of the "seafaring men". The proportion of widows stranded in this outlandish clime was still high—there were fourteen of English nationality alone—but no doubt, in a society so preponderatingly male, these had their consolations and their inducements to remain. There were—rather surprisingly—ten English spinsters. The matrimonial situation is thus summed up by Talboys Wheeler: "Out of one hundred and nineteen Englishmen,

only twenty-six were married to English wives, fourteen were married to Castees, four to Mustees, two to French women, and one to a Georgian. It will be seen that only forty-seven were married at all, and that the remaining seventy-two were bachelors. . . . It seems a great pity that ten young (English) ladies should have been unable to find husbands amongst so large a community of unmarried gentlemen."

If we turn from marryings to buryings, we find that even in those early times the dead were already numerous and—neglected.

The *English* and all the *Europeans* are privedg'd with convenient Repositories for their Dead, within half a Mile of the City. There they endeavour to outvie each other in magnificent Structures and stately Monuments, whose large Extent, beautiful Architecture, and aspiring Heads, make them visible at a remote distance, lovely Objects of the sight, and give them the Title of the Principal Ornaments and Magnificencies about the City. The two most celebrated Fabricks among the *English* set off with stately Towers and Minorets, are that which was Erected for Sir *John Oxonton*, and the other for the Renown'd and Honourable President *Aungers*. The two most noted among the *Dutch*, is one, a noble Pile rais'd over the Body of the *Dutch* Commissary, who died about three Years ago; and another less stately, but more fam'd; built by the order of a Jovial *Dutch* Commander, with three large Punch-Bowls upon the top of it, for the Entertainment and Mirth of his surviving Friends, who remember him there sometimes so much, that they quite forget themselves.

OVINGTON (*circ.* 1690)

*

"The petition of the Ministers and Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Mary's in Fort St. George.

"Humbly representeth,

That whereas the monuments of the dead, and the ground where they are interred are held by most people in some measure sacred, and not lightly applied to any common or profane use, yet it is our misfortune that the English burying place in Fort St. George (where so many of our relations, friends and acquaintants lie buried) is not kept in that decent and due manner it ought to

be, but every day profaned and applied to the most vile and indecent uses; for the Tombs have been made use of for stables for the Buffaloes; which is not only a thing very indecent, but also a very great damage to those buildings, by having so many stakes drove into the pavement and with the walls to fasten the Buffaloes to.

"Another occasion of our complaint on this subject is the Cocoanut trees standing in the burying place; the profit arising from them, we know is inconsiderable, but the nuisance accruing to the place thereby, we are sure is very great. For the Toddy men have people employed there all the day and almost all the night in drawing and selling of Toddy, so that we are obliged on their account to keep the Gates always open, both by day and by night. And then, about eight o'clock at night after work is done, is such a resort of basket makers, Scavengers, people that look after the Buffaloes, and other Parriars, to drink Toddy, that all the Punch houses in Madras have not half the noise in them; and by reason of the gates lying open, beggars and other vagabonds (who know not where to go) make use of the tombs to lie in, and what unclean use the neighbours thereabout do make of that place we forbear to tell. We hope, what is here urged, together with the reflection it must cast on our Church and nation to have so little regard to the repositories of our dead, when all other nations who live among us have so just a regard to theirs, will prevail with your Honor &c. to take this matter into your consideration, and to find out some method to redress these abuses."

Petition to the Governor at Fort St. George. 19th July, 1710

We may pass from the contemplation of this dismal picture to the flamboyant pomp and circumstance with which the Governors and the Chiefs of the Factories—while in life at least—surrounded themselves, and of which they were almost insanely jealous.

However for the *English* Honour be it spoke, none of them surpass the Grandeur of our *East-India* Company, who not only command, but oblige their utmost Respect; none of their Servants shewing themselves in Publick without a Company answerable to theirs, and exceeding them in Civility of Garb and Manners. When the Chief made his Entry at his Return from **the** Fort, it was very Pompous, all the Merchants of Esteem going

to meet him with loud *Indian* Musick and Led-Horses: Before his *Palenkeen* an Horse of State, and two *St. George's* Banners, with *English* Trumpeters; after him the Factors on Horseback, and lusty Fellows running by their sides with *Arundells*, (which are broad Umbrelloes held over their heads.) Soldiers and Spear-men Two hundred at least, and after these a Row of *Palenkeens* belonging to *English* and other Merchants.

At meals their Domesticks wait on them with Obeisance suitable to great Potentates, enclosing their Tables, which are strewn liberally with Dainties served up in Plate of *China*; *Nam nulla aconita bibuntur fictilibus*, says *Juvenal*, which crack when poisoned; which whether true or false (since it is so much practised in this Country by way of Revenge) is but a necessary Caution by all means to avoid.

They fan the Air with Peacocks Tails set in huge Silver Handles, and chiefly now, because the busy Flies would cover the Table, were they not beaten off. Abroad shading their heads with broad Targets held over their heads; washing and rubbing them in their *Tanks*; wanting in no Office may render them acceptable to their Masters.

FRYER (1673)

*

He (Sir John Child) was a quick and expert Merchant, and totally devoted to his Masters Service: Tho' the Factors in *India* charge him with Partiality to his Relations, in advancing them to Stations above their standing, to the Prejudice of those who were their Seniors, and better qualified for such Promotions. They accuse him likewise of a penurious Temper, and injuriously depriving them of the Comfort of *Europe* Liquors, which the Company's Bounty yearly bestowed, that he might the better ingratiate with his Masters for sparing their Expenses, though it were a Diminution both to their Credit and their Factors Health.

He amassed abundance of Wealth during his stay, which was more than Twenty Years in *India*; the least Conjecture which is made of it is 100000 /.

OVINGTON (circ. 1690)

*

There being an ill custome in the Factory (at Masulipatam) of Writers haveing roundells (umbrellas) carried over their heads, which is not used or allowed by the Government of the Towne, but only to the Governour and the three next principall officers and to two or three eminent Merchants of ancient standing . . . and at Fort St George is allowed only to the Councill and Chaplaine. It is therefore ordered that noe Person in this Factory shall have a roundell carried over them but such as are of Councill and the Chaplaine.

STREYNHAM MASTER (1675)

The Very Early East India Company was nothing if not devotedly religious, and successive Governors and Presidents laid down codes of morals of the strictest and most comprehensive kind. Perhaps these were too ambitious for mere human frailty to follow ; at all events they do not seem to have entirely succeeded in their purpose. One must bear in mind the generic adjective I have used already for this period—"primitive"; my concluding quotation from the sorrowful Anderson says all that is to be said on a painful subject.

ORDERS MADE BY US THE AGENT AND COUNCELL FOR AFFAIRS OF THE HONBLE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY UPON THE COAST OF CHORMANDELL AND IN THE BAY OF BENGALE (FOR ADVANCING THE GLORY OF GOD UPHOLDING THE HONOUR OF THE ENGLISH NATION AND THE PREVENTING OF DISORDERS), TO BE OBSERVED BY ALL PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE SAID HONBLE COMPANYS SERVICE

1st. Whosoever shall remaine out of the House all night (without license from the Chief), or be found absent at the time of shutting the gates after nine at night (without a reasonable excuse) shall pay ten Rs. to the use of the Poore or sett one whole day publicly in the stocks.

2nd. Whosoever shall profane the name of God by swearing or Cursing, he shall pay twelve pence to the use of the Poore for every Oath or curse.

3rd. Whosoever shall be guilty of lying shall pay twelve pence for the poore for every such offence.

4th. Whosoever shall appeare to be drunke shall pay five shillings for the use of the poore for every such offence . . . and in defect . . . the offender shall sett in the stocks six houres.

6th. If any, by these penaltys, will not be reclaimed from these vices, or if any shall be found guilty of Adultery, Fornication, uncleanness or any such crime, or shall disturb the peace of the Factory by quarrelling or fighting, he or they shall be sent to Fort St George, there to receive condigne punishment.

STREYNHAM MASTER

MATTHIAS VINCENT

RICHARD MOHUN

JOHN NICKS, Secretary.

STREYNHAM MASTER (1675)

*

There are also some of the Writers who by their lives are not a little scandalous to the Christian religion, so sinful in their drunkenness that some of them play at cards and dice for wine that they may drink, and afterwards throwing the dice which shall pay all, and sometimes who shall drink all, by which some are forced to drink until they be worse than beasts. Others pride themselves in making others drink till they be insensible, and then strip them naked and in that posture (*horresco referens*) cause them to be carried through the streets to their dwelling place. Some of them, with other persons whom they invited, once went abroad to a garden not far off, and there continued a whole day and night drinking most excessively, and in so much that one of the number died within a very few days after, and confessed he had contracted his sickness by that excess. A person worthy of credit having occasion to go the next day into the same garden could number by the heads 36 bottles, and the best of his judgment they were all bottles, for it is their frequent custom to break bottles as soon as they have drunk the wine,

and this they have done sometimes within the walls of the Fort, and withal, sing and carouse at very unseasonable hours.

The Reverend Patrick Warner, Company's Chaplain at Fort St. George, writing to the Court of Directors, 31st January, 1676

*

"Thursday, 8th March, 1688. Mrs. Francis, wife of the late Lieutenant Francis killed at Hoogly by the Moors, being sent hither from Bengal very poor, she made it her petition that she might keep a Punch house for her maintenance. But she being a notorious bad woman, it is agreed that she be not permitted to keep a public house, lest it be the occasion of many debaucheries and disorders; she having lived very scandalously formerly here. It is therefore ordered that she go on the 'Royal James' to the West Coast, and that according to the Right Honorable Company's order, she be allowed something out of the proceeds of the prizes, to provide her necessaries, in consideration of the loss of her husband in the late unhappy Bengal expedition."

Consultation Book: Fort St. George

★

"Friday, 10 May, 1695. Thomas Walton, writer, who was sent hither from Fort St. David because he was refractory and idle, and could by no means be there kept in good order; since and here for eight months being appointed to write under the Secretary always neglected to do what was ordered him; after which he was appointed about three months ago to copy over a Ledger, and all this time has done but eleven folios; though upon information that he used to lie out of the Fort, and spend the nights in wandering up and down about town in Moor's habit, and corrupted several young men to accompany him in debauchery, the President ordered him not to go out of the Fort without leave, and strictly enjoined him to finish the books; and upon further information that Mr. Walton had a design to leave the place and run into the Moor's service, having by his extravagance run in debt beyond his ability to pay, the President gave orders to the Lieutenant of the garrison not to permit him

to go out of the Fort without leave. The whole matter being now represented and discoursed in Council, and Mr. Walton sent for to bring his book, it appears that he has not written one word since he was last ordered, and does declare that he cannot write, but desires to go home. Being thus incorrigible, it is resolved that he also have leave to go by ship 'Armenian Merchant,' and in the meantime to prevent his further debaucheries and running to the Moors, that the officers of the guard room do not permit him to go out of the Fort."

Consultation Book: Fort St. George

*

"Monday, 20th March, 1699. Upon some words yesterday at the General Table, Mr. James Eustace called Mr. George Shaw son of a——, of which he complained to the Governor, who was then present at the Table; and the Governor promised that he would this day hear their difference in council, and punish him that was found guilty of giving occasion for so rude and uncivil a behaviour at the Company's Table. But Mr. Shaw going from Evening Service to the Sea Gate struck Mr. Eustace, of which the Governor being informed confined both to their chambers. Which being considered it is agreed that Mr. Eustace was guilty of great insolence in calling Mr. Shaw son of a——at the Company's Table, and Mr. Shaw of great disrespect to the Governor in striking Mr. Eustace after he had declared he would examine and punish the offender.

"It is unanimously resolved that for the future prevention of offences of the like nature, Mr. Eustace and Mr. Shaw be each of them fined their half year's salary payable in India, and confined to the Fort for one month, and neither to wear sword or cane for twelve months, which resolve they were both forthwith acquainted with."

Consultation Book: Fort St. George

*

"I have received from you two cuts on my head, the one very long and deep, the other a slight thing in comparison to that; then a great blow on my left arme which has enflamed the

shoulder, and deprives me (at present) the use of that limb; on my right side a blow, on my ribs just beneath my pap, which is a stoppage to my breath, and makes me incapable of helping myself; on my left hipp another, nothing inferior to the first; but, above all, a cut on the brow of my left eye. The anguish thereof has caused a swelling, and that swelling destroyed my eyesight, which I should perfectly receive. There is a statute (which assuredly you shall take your triall upon); the sense thereof is, that whosoever shall mame another, shall be thought culpable, and be punished with death."

Charles Peachey to the President (Colt) at Bombay, 1701

*

"As to Hall, had there been any hope of reclaiming him, by being reduced, as your Excellency and Council are pleased to direct, should have done it; but, as he is a restless, factious, and turbulent spirited man, ever promoting and carrying on his rascally designs, would be always reducing others to be confederates with him; therefore, as you were pleased to leave it to us, we thought it with submission much better to be rid of such a scabby sheep, that he might not infect the flock; so have sent him home."

Letter from the Deputy Governor of Bombay, 1701

(Hall had been "Provost Marshal" and a mauvais sujet.)

*

"Monday, 5th June, 1682. Thomas Burrett having most impiously in his cups drank a health to the Devil, the Agent, and Council have thought fit (in regard to his crime is so notorious, and of so black a dye) to order him to run the Gantlope, and to remain in prison until an opportunity of ships presents to send him away from hence to be an example, and to deter others from committing crimes so hellishly wicked."

Consultation Book: Fort St. George

*

Possibly it will occur to the reader, as it has occurred to the writer—that the *dramatis persona* in this chapter are all men of bad character; that I only present offensive details, which are relieved by no examples of goodness and honour. I can only say that I represent the matter faithfully as recorded by the best authorities of the age. Vices were then trifles; to be corrupt and to corrupt others was the fashion. I do not find a word of anything good in the local annals either written or printed. As soon as I do, it will be a pleasure to serve up what must be more agreeable to "the gentle reader" than depreciatory strictures. In the mean while it is not my fault if nausea is created by a surfeit of disgraceful anecdotes.

ANDERSON



II—SNAPSHOTS: SOME PLACES

No attempt has been made to make this section representative—or indeed anything else beyond a receptacle for a number of brief descriptions encountered in the course of one's reading. It follows that many places of repute, beauty and interest are omitted—as they would be in any album of amateur photographs one happened to pick up.

(1) Ceylon

This is the first Shore presented its self in *India*: The Inland hath a Prospect over the Sea: It lies in *North* Latitude 6 deg. 3 min. and Longitude from *Johanna* 37 deg. 10 min. *East*.

This is the Island where (if true) the Elephants are bred, who, transported, exact Homage from all Elephants of other places, and they withal, by prostrating (as it were) their Necks between their Feet, submissively acknowledge it.

FRYER (1673)

*

March 1. (1810) We have now been at Columbo some days; and I am so delighted with the place, and with the English society here, that if I could choose my place of residence for the rest of the time of my absence from England, it should be Columbo.

MARIA GRAHAM

(2) Calcutta

I have seen few sights in my wanderings more beautiful and imposing than the approach to this Petersburg of the East, this magnificent capital of our Eastern empire. On the left was the Botanical Garden with its skreen of tall dark cypress trees; on the right, a long succession of beautiful villas, situated amidst verdant lawns and park-like pleasure-grounds, sloping gently to the water's edge. Here the eye was caught by some pretty kiosk or summerhouse . . . there it rested on a ghaut, or flight of steps

leading to the water, with urns or balustrades, before which, in the mellow *chiaro-scure* of some overhanging banyan-tree, lay moored the elegant covered pleasure-boat of the owner. Hurrying through the grounds a palankeen would appear, with its scampering bevy of attendant bearers and running peons, the huge red chattrah or umbrella . . . bobbing up and down. Standing before many a porticoed mansion, gigs or other equipages would appear in waiting, to take the Sahibs to town, or on their rounds of morning visits . . . Numerous boats glided up and down the river . . . all, in fact, bespoke the close vicinity of a great capital.

BELLEW (1843)

*

The appearance of the country on the entrance of the Ganges, or Houghly river (this being only a branch of the Great Ganges) is rather unpromising; a few bushes at the water's edge, forming a dark line, just marking the distinction between sky and water, are the only objects to be seen. As the ship approaches Calcutta the river narrows; that which is called the Garden Reach, presents a view of handsome buildings, on a flat surrounded by gardens: these are the villas belonging to the opulent inhabitants of Calcutta. The vessel has no sooner gained one other reach of the river than the whole city of Calcutta bursts upon the eye. This capital of the British dominions in the East is marked by a considerable fortress. . . . The glacis and esplanade are seen in perspective, bounded by a range of beautiful and regular buildings; and a considerable reach of the river, with vessels of various classes and sizes, from the largest Indiaman to the smallest boat of the country, closes the scene.

HODGES (1781)

*

Calcutta 22nd May 1780 . . . The town of Calcutta reaches along the eastern bank of the Hoogly; as you come up past Fort William and the Esplanade it has a beautiful appearance. Esplanade-Row, as it is called, which fronts the Fort, seems to be composed of palaces; the whole range, except what is taken up by the Government and Council houses, is occupied by the

principal gentlemen in the settlement. . . . I never saw a more vivid green than adorns the surrounding fields . . . Bengal mutton, always good, is at this period excellent—I must not forget to tell you that there is a very good race ground at a short distance from Calcutta, which is a place of fashionable resort, for morning and evening airings.

MRS FAY

(3) *Bombay*

Bombay comes next in Course, an Island belonging to the Crown of *England*. It was a Part of *Katharine of Portugal's* Portion, when she was married to *Charles II* of *Great Britain*, in *Anno* 1662. Its Ground is steril, and not to be improved. It has but little good Water on it, and the Air is somewhat unhealthful, which is chiefly imputed to their dunging their Cocoa-nut Trees with *Buckshoe*, a Sort of small Fishes which their Sea abounds in. They being laid to the Roots of the Trees, putrify, and cause a most unsavoury Smell; and in the Mornings there is generally seen a thick Fog among those Trees, that affects both the Brains and Lungs of *Europeans*, and breeds Consumption, Fevers, and Fluxes.

HAMILTON (1702)

*

The population of the Island of *Bombay* in 1837 was about 250,000. There are only 221 names of Europeans in the *Bombay Directory* of 1838. The passage out overland of a first-class passenger from London was £125. There was not a single bungalow inhabited by a European on Malabar Hill. One European policeman was stationed at the Point. The view of the harbour from it was a complete forest of masts; two or three tiny steam-boats were nowhere. There were no cotton mills. No water was yet introduced from outside, and no gas. The first cargo of ice arrived from Boston on October 1st, 1836, and soda-water had been introduced in March, 1835. Lucifer matches came about 1838.

JAMES DOUGLAS

*

. . . Can there be such another place on the face of the earth for odd, and I might say blackguard People and things as Bombay?

LADY WEST (1826)

(4) *Madras*

Fort St. *George* or *Maderass*, or, as the Natives call it, *China Patam*, is a Colony and City belonging to the *English East-india* Company, situated in one of the most incommodious Places I ever saw. It fronts the Sea, which continually rolls impetuously on its Shore, more here than in any other Place on the Coast of *Chormondel*. The Foundation in Sand, with a Salt-water River on its back Side, which obstructs all Springs of Fresh-water from coming near the Town, so that they have no drinkable Water within a Mile of them, the Sea often threatening Destruction on one Side, and the River in the rainy Season Inundations on the other, the Sun from *April* to *September* scorching hot; and if the Sea-breeses did not moisten and cool the Air when they blow, the Place could not possibly be inhabited.

HAMILTON (1702)

*

The English town, rising from within Fort St George, has from the sea a rich and beautiful appearance; the houses being covered with a stucco called chunam, which in itself is nearly as compact as the finest marble, and, as it bears as high a polish, is equally splendid with that elegant material. The stile of the buildings is in general handsome. They consist of long colonnades, with open porticoes, and flat roofs, and offer to the eye an appearance similar to what we may conceive of a Grecian city in the age of Alexander. The clear, blue, cloudless sky, the polished white buildings, the bright sandy beach, and the dark green sea, present a combination totally new to the eye of an Englishman... who ... cannot but contemplate the difference with delight: and the eye being thus gratified, the mind soon assumes a gay and tranquil habit, analogous to the pleasing objects with which it is surrounded.

Some time before the ship arrives at her anchoring ground, she

is hailed by the boats of the country filled with people of business, who come in crowds on board. This is the moment in which an European feels the greatest distinction between Asia and his own country. The rustling of fine linen, and the general hum of unusual conversation, presents to his mind for a moment the idea of an assembly of females. When he ascends upon the deck, he is struck with the long muslin dresses, and black faces adorned with very large gold ear-rings and white turbans. The first salutation he receives from these strangers is by bending their bodies very low, touching the deck with the back of the hand, and the forehead three times.

HODGES (1780)

*

. . . There is something uncommonly striking and grand in this town, and its whole appearance charms you from novelty, as well as beauty. Many of the houses and public buildings are very extensive and elegant—they are covered with a sort of shell-lime which takes a polish like marble, and produces a wonderful effect.—I could have fancied myself transported into Italy, so magnificently are they decorated, yet with the utmost taste. People here say that the *chunam* as it is called, loses its properties when transported to Bengal, where the dampness of the atmosphere prevents it from receiving that exquisite polish so much admired by all who visit Madras. . . . In fact Madras is what I conceived Grand Cairo to be, before I was so unlucky as to be undeceived. . . . It is true this glittering surface is here, and there tinged with the sombre hue that more or less colours every condition of life;—you behold Europeans, languishing under various complaints which they call incidental to the climate, an assertion . . . respecting which I am a little sceptical; because I see that the same mode of living, would produce the same effects, even "in the hardy regions of the North."

. . . We have made several excursions in the neighbourhood of Madras which is everywhere delightful, the whole vicinity being ornamented with gentlemen's houses built in a shewy style of architecture, and covered with that beautiful *chunam*. As they are almost surrounded by trees, when you see one of these superb dwellings incompassed by a grove, a distant view of Madras with the sea and shipping, so disposed as to form a

perfect landscape, it is beyond comparison the most charming picture I ever beheld or could have imagined.

MRS FAY (1780)

*

I do not know anything more striking than the first approach to Madras. The low flat sandy shore extending for miles to the north and south, for the few hills there are appear far inland, seems to promise nothing but barren nakedness, when, on arriving in the roads, the town and fort are like a vision of enchantment.

MARIA GRAHAM (1810)

*

At the Foot of the great Mount, the Company has a Garden, and so have the Gentlemen of Figure at Fort St. George, with some Summer-houses where Ladies and Gentlemen retire to in the Summer, to recreate themselves, when the Business of the Town is over, and to be out of the Noise of Spungers and impertinent Visitants, whom this City is often molested with.

HAMILTON (1702)

*

I have just returned from a week's excursion to Ennore, a fishing village eight miles north of Madras, where there is a small salt-water lake, with abundance of fine fish and excellent oysters. These attractions have induced a party of gentlemen to build a house by subscription on the edge of the lake, where there is a meeting every week to eat fish, play cards, and sail about on the lake in two little pleasure-boats, a diversion which cannot be enjoyed anywhere else near Madras on account of the surf.

MARIA GRAHAM (1810)

(5) Goa

Goa, the Metropolis of *India*, under the Dominion of the Crown of *Portugal*, stands on an Island about 12 Miles long, and

6 broad. The City is built on the North Side of it, on a Champaign Ground, and has the Conveniency of a fine salt Water River, capable to receive Ships of the largest Size, where they ly within a Mile of the Town. The Banks of the River are beautified with noble Structures of Churches, Castles and Gentlemens Houses; but, in the City, the Air is reckoned unwholsom, which is one Cause why at present it is not well inhabited. The Vice-roy's Palace is a noble Edifice, standing within Pistol Shot of the River, over one of the Gates of the City, which leads to a spacious noble Street, about half a Mile long, and terminates at a beautiful Church, called *Misericordia*. The City contains many noble Churches, Convents, and Cloisters, with a stately large Hospital, all well endow'd, and well kept. The Market-place stands near the *Misericordia* Church, and takes up about an Acre square, where most Things of the Product of that Country are to be sold; and, in the Shops about it, may be had what *Europe*, *China*, *Bengal*, and other Countries of less Note furnish them with. Every Church has a Set of Bells, that one or other of them are continually ringing, and, being all christned, and dedicated to some Saint, they have a specifick Power to drive away all Manner of evil spirits, except Poverty in the Laity, and Pride in the Clergy; but, to those that are not used to nocturnal Noises, they are very troublesom in the Nights. The Vice-roy generally resides at the Powder-house, about two Miles below the City, on the River Side, the Springs of Water there being reckoned the best on the Island, which is a Liquor very much esteemed by the *Portugueze*, except when they can get wine or Spirits Cost free, and then they'll drink to Excess.

HAMILTON (1702)

(6) *Masulipatam*

Being sent for on Shore by the desire of the Factory, by one of the Country Boats, I was landed at *Mechlapatan*: These Boats are as large as one of our Ware-Barges, and almost of that Mould, sailing with one Sail like them, but padling with Paddles instead of Spreads, and carry a great Burthen with little trouble; outliving either Ship or *English* Skiff over the Bar. Which by the rapid motion of the Waves driving the Sands into an Head, makes a noise as deafning as the Cataracts of *Nile*, and not seldom as difficult a Downfal. Over this the Land shuts us up

on both sides, and the stiller Waters contentedly do part their Streams to embrace the Town.

Near which a Fort or Blockade (if it merit to be called so) made of Dirt, hides half a score great Guns; under the command of which several *Moors Junks* ride at Anchor. A Bow-shot from whence the Town it self, environed with a Mud Wall, entrenched with a stinking Moras, and at some time Moated with the Sea, creates a spacious Prospect; it is of Form oblong.

Their *Bank Soils*, or Custom-House Keys, where they land, are Two; but mean, and shut only with ordinary Gates at Night.

FRYER (1673)

(7) Poona

It was not till June that it was really fashionable to be in Poona. . . . This was the Poona Season. Everyone in Bombay who was anyone came up to Poona for week-ends during the Season, or, in the case of wealthy merchants, rented bungalows for the Season and installed their wives there to avoid the tiresome climate of Bombay during the monsoon. . . . The correspondents of Bombay newspapers kept their readers informed about the trend of fashion in the ball-room or on the croquet-lawn. New-comers to the Poona Season were warned not to "do too much", and above all not to eat too many mangoes, which in the first half of June are most luscious and enticing. Too many mangoes gave one diarrhoea, or as it was carefully called, "Poonaitis". . . . While the ladies drove to the Gymkhana soon after tea, the gentlemen drove there straight from office so as to be able to put in a full hour or two hours at tennis or croquet. Many of the ladies played croquet too, but others preferred to sit on basket chairs in the veranda and sew. . . . They would visit the Club Library, but would be unlikely to find any books there. . . . No one under the rank of a Collector's wife had a hope of securing one except by luck. So they would content themselves with gossip about the last ball at Government House, the delinquencies of their servants and the health of their children. And indeed what else should they talk about? There were no theatres or cinemas and only an occasional concert. . . . Their children rolled and crawled and played on the lawn that was of almost English thickness and was bordered by the banks of many-coloured cannas for which Poona was justly famous and

by the blue-grey shrubs of sensitive plants. . . . There were a few English and Eurasian nurses and these kept rigidly to themselves, sewing like their mistresses and nodding together over the events at the Sergeants' Dance on Saturday night—those dances at the Canteen where the etiquette was of terrifying strictness and a girl's reputation was gone if she were not returned to her parents by her partner as soon as each dance was over.

KINCAID (writing of the period *circa* 1911)

*

Poonah is an excellent and delightful cantonment. The roads about it are good, the society hospitable and gay. An amateur theatre affords a very material source of amusement in the station, and is admirably supported. The building is pretty and well lighted, the stage small, but the scenery and drop curtain excellently painted, good limners being usually found among the European soldiery. A good orchestra, occupied by the best military band, completes the arrangements; and the whole is a fertile source of general entertainment. Several officers of the 40th regiment, some short time since stationed at Poonah, were admirable as amateurs of the histrionic art; and I have seen the *School for Scandal*, the *Rivals*, the *Critic*, and many of our best English comedies, performed in a manner which would have been creditable to actors by profession. These amusements are commonly terminated by a supper, which the amateurs either enjoy in character on the stage, or adjourn to do full justice to, at the neighbouring bungalow of some hospitable patron of the comic muse. . . . Fancy balls are also a source of considerable amusement to the social circle, as well of pecuniary advantage to the Borah and Dirzi tribes, the first being persecuted by applications for tinsel and coloured satins, and the latter puzzled to clip and fit such garments, as offer a task quite unrivalled in difficulty, by any of their common avocations. To fashion the grey coat of Napoleon, or adorn the ribanded hat of Massaniello, are comparatively simple duties; but the full dress uniform of an Austrian officer, the picturesque costume of a Swiss peasant, or the drooping beaver of Robin Hood, plunges them into dismay. The effect of an Indian ball-room, on these particular festivities, really affords a proof of very considerable

genius, in producing results so admirable, out of the very scanty means, commonly alone procurable, in the Borah stores of the native bazaar.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

(8) *Ootacamund*

"For the first time I have seen Ootacamund. *Having* seen it, I affirm it to be a paradise, and declare without hesitation that in every particular it far surpasses all that its most enthusiastic admirers and devoted lovers have said to us about it. The afternoon was rainy and the road muddy, but such beautiful *English* rain, such delicious *English* mud. Imagine Hertfordshire lanes, Devonshire downs, Westmoreland lakes, Scotch trout streams, and Lusitanian views!"

LORD LYTTON (1877)

*

During your first fortnight (in the Nilgiri Hills) all was excitement, joy, delight. You luxuriated in the cool air. Your appetite improved. The mutton had a flavour which you did not recollect in India. Strange, yet true, the beef was tender, and even the "unclean" was not too much for your robust digestion. You praised the vegetables, and fell into ecstasy at the sight of peaches, apples, strawberries and raspberries, after years of plantains, guavas, and sweet limes. You, who could scarcely walk a mile in the low country . . . wandered for hours over hill and dale without being fatigued. With what strange sensations of pleasure you threw yourself upon the soft turf bank, and plucked the first daisy which you ever saw out of England! And how you enjoyed the untropical occupation of sitting over a fire in June!—that very day last year you were in a state of semi-existence, only "kept going" by the power of punkahs and quasi-nudity.

BURTON (1847)

(A note of warning about Burton: he could see little good in anything Indian—not even, after longer acquaintance, in the Nilgiris.)

(9) *Lucknow*

The style in which this remote colony lived was surprising, it far exceeding even the expense and luxuriousness of Calcutta. As it was the custom of these families to dine alternately with each other, they had established a numerous band of musicians, who played during dinner. I had singular pleasure on hearing some old English and Scotch airs played extremely well.

TWINING (1795)

(10) *Calicut*

Can those three or four bungalows, with that stick-like light-house between them and the half-dozen tiled and thatched roofs peeping from amongst the trees, compose Calicut—the city of world-wide celebrity, which immortalised herself by giving a name to calico? Yes We shall meet few Europeans in the streets: there are scarcely twenty in this place, including all the varieties of civilians, merchants, missionaries, and officers. . . . Most of the residents inhabit houses built upon an eminence to the north of the town; others live as close as possible to the sea. A dreary life they must lead, one would suppose, especially during the monsoon, when the unhappy expatriated's ears are regaled by no other sounds but the pelting of the rain, the roaring of the blast, and the creaking of the cocoa trees, whilst a curtain of raging sea, black sky, and watery air, is all that meets his weary ken.

BURTON (1847)

(11) *Mussoorée*

In front of Mussoori you are in high public, the road called the Mall is from eight to ten feet wide, covered with children, nurses, dogs, and sickly ladies and gentlemen, walking about gaily dressed. I always avoid the Mall; I go out for enjoyment and health, and do not want to talk to people. The children! it is charming to see their rosy faces; they look as well and as strong as any children in England; the climate of the Hills is certainly far superior to that of England. . . .

Visited Mr Webb's hotel for families; it is an excellent one and very commodious. There is a ball-room, and five billiard-tables with slate beds; these slate beds have only just arrived in India, and have very lately been introduced in England.

MRS PARKES (1838)

(12) *Meerut*

Meerut is a large European station—a quantity of barracks and white bungalows spread over four miles of plain. There is nothing to see or to draw.

MISS EDEN (1838)

(13) *Allahabad*

Allahabad is now one of the gayest, and is, as it always has been, one of the prettiest stations in India. We have dinner-parties more than enough; balls occasionally; a book society; some five or six billiard-tables; a pack of dogs, some amongst them hounds, and (how could I have forgotten!) fourteen spinsters 1

MRS PARKES (1832)

(14) *Bangalore*

I am charmed with Bangalore, and hope it will do us all a great deal of good. The climate at this time of the year is delightful, equal to any in Europe. For the first two or three days there was a good deal of fog, but it has now cleared away, and all is so cool, clear, and bright, that it is quite a pleasure to feel oneself breathing. The early mornings especially are as pleasant as anything I can imagine: they have all the sweetness and freshness of an English summer. The air smells of hay and flowers, instead of ditches, dust, fried oil, curry, and onions, which are the *best* of the Madras smells. There are superb dahlias growing in the gardens, and to-day I saw a real staring full-blown hollyhock, which was like meeting an old friend from England, instead of the tuberoses, pomegranates, &c, I have been accustomed to see for the last two years. We have apples, pears, and peaches, and I really should know them all one from the other, though it must be confessed there is a considerable

family likeness, strongly reminding us* of a potato; still they look like English fruit: and the boys bring baskets of raspberries for sale, which are very like blackberries indeed. The English children are quite fat and rosy, and wear shoes and stockings.

There are fireplaces in most of the houses, and no punkahs in any of them. It is altogether very pleasant, but a queer place, a sort of cross-breed between the watering-places of every country in the world. Ladies going about dressed to every pitch of distraction they can invent, with long curls which the heat would not allow for an hour elsewhere, and warm close bonnets with flowers hanging in and out of them like queens of the May; black niggers, naked or not, as suits their taste; an English church, a Heathen Pagoda, botanical garden, public ball-rooms, Dissenting meeting-houses, circulating library, English shops, and Parsee merchants, all within sight of each other; Elephants and horses walking together in pleasant company over a great green plain in front of our house, where the soldiers exercise; European soldiers and Sepoys meeting at every step; an evening promenade where people take good brisk walks at an English pace, and chirp like English sparrows, while a band of blackies play "God save the Queen" and call it the "General Salute."

Letters from Madras (1839)

(15) "*Kabob*"

(The) bungalows, you observe, look like exaggerated beehives, perched upon milestones—a judicious combination of mud, whitewash, and thatch. . . . That square whitewashed edifice, with an excrescence at one end, looking for all the world like an extinguisher on a three-dozen chest!—what is it? You may well ask. It is the church! a regular protestant building! protesting against everything architectural, aesthetic, ornamental, or useful; designed and built according to a Government prescription. Next to it is our assembly-room and theatre; just beyond you see the hospitals; then comes the racket-court, and to the left is the well-stocked burial-ground. This is the course, where the live splendour of Kabob resort when shades of evening close upon us. There is the band-stand, and this is the station bath. On the extreme right are the barracks, for you must know that Europeans man the guns of our battery that is quartered here. That is the

artillery-mess, and opposite lives Stickerdoss, who sells Europe goods, and can accommodate you with anything, from a baby's bottle to a bolster.

Curry and Rice (1859)

III—THE WEATHER

A sizable book could be made up of extracts on this subject alone. But after all, the climatic conditions of India are by now fairly well-known; and moreover the comments and reactions of our contributors tend to repetition. As most of them arrived in the country in the course of a cold weather—and often a North India cold weather at that—they are at first rapturous; presently there is an outcry about the increasing heat, which in some instances silences them altogether, at least temporarily. Then, as the years pass, the heat becomes less noticeable or is taken for granted; till finally those who have stayed the course long enough—as for instance Miss Eden and Mrs Parkes—are found complaining that the cold weather is uncomfortably arctic and clamouring for shawls and fires. The extracts which make up this section give some idea of the contrary views encountered on that vexed subject, the Indian climate; with some instances of what it can do when it tries. Dates are here immaterial—the Indian climate being now as it was—except in so far as they suggest the comforts and alleviations which the ingenuity of progressive science had devised. The resources of earlier days were greater than is sometimes realised; ice, cold drinks, and devices for moving and freshening the air—from a man with a fan through kas-kas tatties to the swinging punkah (circa 1790) and the thermantidote—were all in use by the first decade of the nineteenth century at latest.

As one's eye wanders again and again over the scenes above described (arrival at Calcutta) you become conscious of the absence of a something to which you have generally been accustomed, you miss some familiar object which you fancy should be here—what is it? Look attentively up at that blue sky, down at those snow-white houses, along the gay Chowringhee, and say what that "something" is! Ah! Eureka! SMOKE! . . . No smoke! . . . No murky vapours, in dark conspiracy with fogs and mists . . . no curling wreaths of smoke to blacken freshly painted houses, and stain the unsullied purity of white glittering walls or bright green verandahs and Venetians. And it is the absence of these dim and dulling vapours which gives to Calcutta

something of the dazzling appearance of a town reflected in a highly polished mirror . . . as **the** stranger views **it** through **that** sun-glint, which is ever dancing and sparkling before it. Such is Calcutta; such did it appear to me when I first beheld it—a bright fairy city, unlike any place I had ever seen before.

* MAJENDIE (1859)

*

. . . The weather now wet and damp enough to please any one. We have been quite busy putting up a Punka in one of our drawing-rooms, but now the weather reminds me of dear Tunbridge Wells, so damp and chill. I long for a fire—thermometer 75⁰.

LADY WEST (in Bombay, 1824)

*

"The rain streamed down in floods. It was very seldom that I could see a hundred yards in front of me. During a month together I did not get two hours' walking."

MACAULAY (at Ooty, 1834)

*

And, now, were I asked to define this saving clause of Indian life or life in India, the *that*, which makes all uplifting, love-inspiring and delightful, I should say—it was the weather, the glorious sunshine, the blue skies, the lovely foliage, flowers and trees, the hills and dales and beautiful scenery, the freedom, the open-air life and, what you must never look for in England, the sociability and amusements, without which Jack must always be a dull boy.

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

What a detestable place this Ootacamund is during the rains! From morning to night, and from night to morning, gigantic piles of heavy **wet** clouds . . . rise up slowly from **the** direction

of the much-vexed Koondahs; each, as it impinges against the west flank of the giant Dodabetta, drenching us with one of those outpourings that resemble nothing but a vast aggregation of the biggest and highest Douche baths. In the interim, a gentle drizzle, now deepening into a shower, now driven into sleet, descends with vexatious perseverance. When there is no drizzle there is a Scotch mist: when the mist clears away, it is succeeded by a London fog. The sun, "shorn of his rays", spitefully diffuses throughout the atmosphere a muggy warmth, the very reverse of genial. . . . The surface of the mountains, for the most part, is a rich and reddish mould, easily and yet permanently affected by the least possible quantity of water. Thus the country becomes impassible, the cantonment dirty, every place wretched, every one miserable.

BURTON (1847)

*

One night in September, a violent and incessant rain commenced—heavy rain which continued without ceasing, insomuch that all the walls enclosing our garden began to melt, being formed of unburnt brick. The upper part, being protected by the overhanging tiles, was getting too heavy for the sodden foundation, and parts of the walls commenced falling at the rate of one hundred yards at a time with a sound like thunder.

As the beating rain continued till night our alarm became very great, and, having gone to bed, we became so much agitated that we arose at twelve o'clock, waiting in anxious expectation for the giving way of the walls of the house itself. Every moment we heard the crash of a falling wall, and, on looking out, the whole plain presented the appearance of a sea in a dead calm under a pelting shower. The walls round our garden were all down before daylight, and the stable showed symptoms of giving way. Towards evening the rain ceased, and our minds were relieved.

MRS SHERWOOD (1814)

*

June 9th 1830—A storm is raging (at Cawnpore); it arose in clouds of dust, which, sweeping over the river from the Lucnow

side, blow directly on the windows of the drawing-room; they are all fastened, and a man at every one of them, or the violence of the wind would burst them open; my mouth and eyes are full of fine sand; I can scarcely write;—not a drop of rain, only the high wind, and the clouds of dust so thick we cannot see across the verandah. . . . In Calcutta we had severe storms, with thunder and lightning; here, nothing but clouds of sand—reaching from earth to heaven—with a hot yellow tinge, shutting out the view entirely. The storm has blown for an hour and is just beginning to clear off; I can see the little white-crested waves on the river beneath the verandah

In the open air the thermometer stands at 130°; in the drawing-room, with three tattis (screens) up, at 88°.

Dec. 5th 1833—People talk of wonderful storms of hail. I have just witnessed one (at Allahabad) so very severe, that had I not seen it, I think I should scarcely have believed it. At ten at night a storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning, came on; the hail fell thick as flakes of snow,—I can scarcely call it hail, the pieces were ice-bolts. I brought in some which measured four inches and a half in circumference, and the ground was covered some inches deep. . . . The glass windows were all broken, the tobacco plants cut down . . . and the small twigs from the mango and nim trees covered the ground like a green carpet.. . . The next morning for miles around you saw the effect of the hail, and in the bazaar at eight a.m. the children were playing marbles with the hailstones.

MRS PARKES

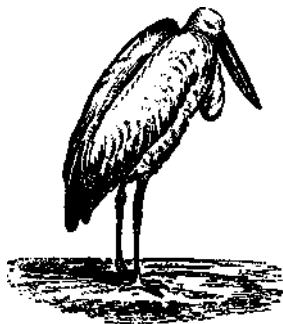
*

I had such a bad headache all yesterday. I could not go down to our party, and it was partly accounted for at night by a most awful thunderstorm. We are used to a considerable deal of clatter in the way of thunder, but anything like this I never heard; such sharp cracks, and the night as light as day with the lightning; it was really unpleasant, though I do not care much about thunder in general. All Calcutta got up and rushed about their houses, and got under their beds, and into their closets, and all the usual precautions. I prefer lying in bed, not knowing how to die more comfortably; but Wright stalked about with a small night lamp in her hand, followed by the bath woman with

another, she saying in English that we should all be killed, **and** I suppose Jeltom was saying the same in Hindustani; and Giles and Bright thought the great figure of Britannia at the top of the house had been struck, and they came to see whether it had fallen into my passage; and Zoe set up a howl; and all the stable-keepers say that their horses trembled dreadfully before the storm began, and many of them broke loose when it came. Altogether it was a bad storm, and the lightning struck an adjutant* that was perched on one of our gateways and cut off its ugly head. The plain was quite under water this morning.

MISS EDEN (1841)

**Bird, not officer.*



IV—HEALTH, SICKNESS AND SUDDEN DEATH

A—Some Views on "*Feavers*" and Lesser Evils

We are, happily, all well, though there has been a great deal of illness in Calcutta; the doctors say their list has trebled the last fortnight. Sir H. Fane has been one of the worst cases, but he is out of danger, and goes off to the Sandheads in one of our boats to-morrow. That is always the final cure, and I take it to be a thorough punishment for the folly of being ill. People generally go in the pilot vessels, which are swarming with cockroaches; and they cruise about, for ten days, in the roughest of seas, but come back pretty well. Though people have very violent illnesses here, and those that are well, look about as fresh as an English *corpse*, yet I do not think the mortality is greater than in any other country, and the old-fashioned days of imprudence about health are quite as much gone by as the times of great extravagance. People save their money, and don't go out in sun.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

The Common Distemper that destroys the most in *India*, is Feavers, which the *Europeans* with difficulty escape, especially if they have build up their Spirits by solemn Repast, and been ingag'd in a strong Debauch. Besides this, the Mordechine is another Disease of which some die, which is a violent Vomiting and Looseness, and is caus'd most frequently by an Excess in Eating, particularly of Fish and Flesh together. It has been Cur'd by a Red-hot Iron clapt to the Heel of him that is sick, so close that it renders him uneasie by its nearness, whereby it leaves a Scar behind it.

OVINGTON (1690)

But at *Bombay, September and October*, those two Months which immediately follow the Rains, are very pernicious to the Health of the *Europeans*; in which two Moons more of them die, than generally in all the Year besides. For the excess of earthy Vapours after the Rains ferment the Air, and raise therein such a sultry Heat, that scarce any is able to withstand the Feverish Effect it has upon their Spirits, nor recover themselves from those Fevers and Fluxes into which it casts them. And this the *Indians* remark concerning the excessive Heats at this time, that they say, " 'Tis September's Sun which causeth the black List upon the Antilope's Back." Which common Fatality has created a Proverb among the English there, that *Two Mussouns are the Age of a Man*.

OVINGTON (1690)

*

Mr Davies, the Advocate-General, finding his health declining, took his passage for Europe; but as the time approached for the ship's sailing he fancied himself much better and therefore resolved to remain at his post another season, to which determination he fell a sacrifice, as many besides him have done, from too eager a desire to accumulate money. His death brought to my recollection an epitaph I had formerly read upon the tombstone of a Dutch gentleman at Sadras on the coast of Coromandel:

Mynheer Gludenstack lies interred here,
Who intended to have gone home next year.

HICKEY (1790)

*

I continued in this hopeless state ten days, the doctors in the morning thinking it impossible for me to survive until night, and the same from night to morning. In this forlorn condition I was allowed to drink as much claret as I pleased, and delicious it was to my palate. . . .

. . . . Sir John Royds was indebted to claret for his very unexpected recovery; during the last week of the disease they

poured down his throat from three to four bottles of that generous beverage every four-and-twenty hours, and with extraordinary effect.

HICKEY (1790)

*

How fearful are fevers in India! On this day my husband was attacked; . . . medicine was of no avail, the illness increased hourly. On the 9th of April, the aid of the superintending surgeon was requested; a long consultation took place, and a debate as to which was to be employed, the lancet, or a bottle of claret; it terminated in favour of the latter, and claret to the extent of a bottle a day was given him. His head was enveloped in three bladders of ice, and iced towels were around his neck. On the 17th day, for the first time since the commencement of the attack, he tasted food; that is, he ate half a small bun; before that, he had been supported solely on claret and fresh strawberries, being unable to take broth or arrowroot. . . . Thanks to good doctoring, good nursing, and good claret, at the end of the month he began to recover health and strength.

MRS PARKES (1828)

*

July 17th 1824—The people in Calcutta have all had it (the fever). I suppose, out of the whole population, European and native, not two hundred persons have escaped; and what is singular, it has not occasioned one death amongst the adult. I was so well and strong—overnight we were talking of the best means of escaping the epidemic—in the morning it came and remained thirty-six hours, then quitted me; a strong eruption came out, like the measles, and left me weak and thin. My husband's fever left him in thirty-six hours, but he was unable to quit the house for nine days; the rash was the same. Some faces were covered with spots like those on a leopard's skin. . . .

September 1st 1824—The fever has quitted Calcutta, and travelled up the country stage by stage. It was amusing to see, upon your return to the Course, the whole of the company

stamped, like yourself, with the marks of the leech upon the temples.

MRS PARKES (1824)

*

"The unwholesome weather which ever attends the breaking-up of the rains" is a text often discoursed on by the old newspapers. One editor tells his subscribers that he has the authority of a medical correspondent for recommending them to "drink deep in rosy port" in September, to guard against the influenza. . . . In June, on the other hand, the newspapers give the public the much-needed advice not to eat too much in the hot weather, and the moral is pointed by quoting (June 1780) the recent and awful fate of "the Surgeon of an Indiaman, who fell dead after eating a hearty dinner of beef, the thermometer being 98⁰."

BUSTEED

*

There is another evil also which must be borne and "grinned at" if possible—I mean "prickly heat"—a sort of rash which breaks out on you, and, as its name infers, prickly in its nature; I can only compare it to lying in a state of nudity on a horse-hair sofa, rather worn, and with the prickles of horse-hair very much exposed, and with other horse-hair sofas above you, and all round, tucking you in. Sitting on thorns would be agreeable by comparison, the infliction in that case being local; now, not a square inch of your body but is tingling and smarting with shooting pains, till you begin to imagine that in your youth you *must* have swallowed a packet of needles, which now oppressed by heat are endeavouring to make their escape from your interior, where they find themselves smothered in this hot weather.

MAJENDIE (1859)

*

I escaped the ball at Lady—'s last night by the **happy accident** of a swelled face, a sort of thing that happens in this

country in two minutes; we are so hot, and then we sit in a draught and get a swelled face or a lip as big as two. It goes off again just as suddenly, and I take it kindly that it came yesterday and went to-day. They say the ball was such a crowd.

MISS EDEN (1840)

*

18th March 1835—My dear Colonel Gardner, seeing how ill I was, said "You will never recover, my child, in the outer house; I will give you a room in the inner one, and put you under the care of the bagam (Col. G's Mohammedan wife); there you will soon recover." He took me over to the zenana; the begam received me very kindly, and appointed four of her slaves to attend upon me, and aid my own women. They put me immediately into a steam-bath, shampooed, mulled and half-boiled me; cracked every joint after the most approved fashion, took me out, laid me on a golden-footed bed, gave me sherbet to drink, shampooed me to sleep, and by the time the shooting party returned from the Gunga, I had perfectly recovered, and was able to enter into all the amusement of seeing a Hindostanee wedding.

MRS PARKES (1835)

B—Doctors

That the doctors of the early days were frankly in a fog is evident, if only from such items as the apparent efficacy of the claret cure in fevers just noticed. The appended strictures of the versifier in the Bengal Gazette were not unmerited and Bus feed's description of the activities of the profession is fair enough; on the other hand the inoculation experiment on the Orphans—in vile corpore?—shows that after all the doctors were not wholly benighted.

Some doctors in India would make Plato smile;
If you fracture your skull they pronounce it the bile,
And with terrific phiz and a stare most sagacious,
Give a horse-ball of jalap and pills saponaceous.

A sprain in your toe or an aguish shiver,
The faculty here call a touch of the liver,
And with ointment mercurii and pills calomelli,
They reduce all the bones in your skin to a jelly.

If your wife has a headache, let Sangrado but touch her,
And he'll job in his lancet like any hog butcher;
Tho' in putrid complaints dissolution is rapid,
He'll bleed you to render the serum more vapid.

And for stemming the tide of all "critical fluxes",
Doctor Phlebos demands most exorbitant "buxis";
By such spurious systems Dame Nature they force,
And if you escape, you've the strength of a horse.

In a very few days you're released from all cares—
If the Padre's asleep, Mr Oldham* reads prayers;
To the grave you're let down with a sweet pleasant thump,
And there you may lie till you hear the last trump.

Calcutta Newspaper of 1781

*(*Mr Oldham was the original Calcutta undertaker.)*

*

It was usual to describe the practice then in vogue (medicine at the close of the 18th century) as being active and heroic; and of course it was thought necessary to apply it with superlative energy in a country where experience seemed to show that the crisis was rapidly reached. Accordingly, when summoned to the bedside, it became a race between the doctor and the disease. A certain rhyming formula addressed in the imperative mood to the apothecary, commencing "physic blister", was promptly brought into force, and the patient who had undergone these vigorous and well-meant invasions, was uncommonly lucky if he escaped being there and then "cupped and blooded" into the bargain. It is superfluous to add that the only benefit following this misdirected zeal, was that derived by the apothecary and the undertaker. It should be added, in justice to the

Calcutta medical men of a hundred years ago, that they naturally enough followed the system in which they had been indoctrinated in Europe—they merely energetically adopted the practice which was the orthodox one till far into the present century. The letting of blood was its panacea. Its time-honoured motto was "seignare, seignare, ensuite purgare." . . . "In these days", says the *Lancet* (in 1860) "we look with wonder at the medical art which in twenty-four hours could bleed three times a fasting man, then blister him, and finally supplement the so-called treatment with two strong narcotic draughts/'

BUSTEED

*

We are happy in having it in our power to inform our readers of a successful instance of inoculation in this climate. The managers of the Orphan Society, about two months ago, agreed that all the children under their charge, who had not already had the small-pox, should be inoculated, and they requested Mr Nasmyth, Surgeon . . . to perform the operation. Our correspondent acquaints us that fifty-three children who were inoculated have had the disorder, and are now perfectly recovered; but out of nine who took the disorder in the natural way, three have died. These children escaped Mr Nasmyth's most minute observation, and indeed it is not to be wondered at, when we consider the very great number he had to examine. Every individual must feel much pleasure in observing this amongst many instances of the care and attention of the managers of this humane institution.

Calcutta Gazette, 4th May, 1786

C—"In the Midst of Life"—

The "White Man's Grave" aspect of early India is a commonplace; but however airily one may discuss it, one cannot but be appalled by the commentary provided by contemporary journals and memoirs on the risks attending the Indian adventure in the days of the Nabobs—and indeed for a long time thereafter. Casual and matter-of-fact as the references often are, the cumulative evidence is frightening; and so frequently one knows in advance that the "Journal" or "Letters" are to meet with a sudden and categorical

guillotine. It is heart-rending, for instance, to read the diaries of that charming personality Lady West with their catalogue of friends falling by the way, their suggestion of mounting terror as the grim spectre stalks nearer and nearer home—when one knows all the time that both "Edward" and his Lucretia were doomed. One is left wondering at the courage that carried men—and the devotion that carried their wives—to the East of those lethal days. Either the prospects must have been uncommonly rosy or the statistics of European mortality ill promulgated.

You cannot imagine in India how the ranks close in the very day after death. The most intimate friends never stay at home above two days, and they see everybody again directly. It is a constant surprise to me, but I suppose there must be some good reason for it, as it is always the case. I should have thought grief might have taken just the other line, but I suppose they really could not bear it *alone* here; and then they never are free from the sight of human beings, from the practice of servants being always at hand. However, so it always is. Dr.———had more warm friends than anybody, but there was not one who stayed away from the races after his death.

MISS EDEN (1837)

★

Lieutenant Montague, at Colaba, returning from mess, put his foot in a hole, received a slight wound which in twenty-five minutes carried him off. Some jurors thought it was from the bite of a serpent.

Bombay Newspaper, 25th June, 1839

*

Upon coming to the door of the house, we dismounted, but not a soul appeared to receive us. Mr Dawson, much surprised, conducted me into the hall, and loudly called, "Holloa, Boy, Boy!" the usual manner of summoning servants at Madras. After repeating this several times without any effect . . . he proceeded to his friend's bedchamber, from whence I heard him exclaim, "Good God, poor Stone is dead", and again joining me he told me he was laying upon the bed a corpse. . . . Instead

therefore of the cheerful, pleasant day we had expected, Mr Dawson was employed some hours arranging matters for the funeral. . . . At three o'clock in the afternoon we set out on our return home, greatly shocked at the melancholy occurrence, at least, I was, for I certainly thought Mr Dawson betrayed an indifference that did him no credit in my eyes, and treated this sudden death quite as a thing of course, and of no importance.

HICKEY (1769)

*

Among the Europeans in India, there are scarcely any old persons, as almost everybody is a temporary resident. Here, if you search the well-tenanted burying grounds of the large cities, you will discover few besides the graves of the youthful, who have been cut off by some violent disease amid the buoyancy of health, or the tombs of those of middle age arrested by death when just about to reap the fruit of long toil and privation by returning to their native land. It is this which renders our Indian cemeteries so peculiarly melancholy; for though we bow to the decree which summons away the aged and the infirm, yet, humanly speaking, and in our blindness, we are apt to pronounce the death of the young to be premature, and a fit subject of aggravated regret.

MRS LUSHINGTON (1827)

*

The breaking up of the rains this season was attended with much fatal illness, and a number of the European inhabitants of Calcutta were carried off; in the month of September alone there were seventy funerals.

HICKEY (1791)

*

There were living (in Bombay in 1706-7) but eight covenanted servants, including Members of Council, two persons more who could write, and two raw youths who had been taken out of English ships. Most of the survivors were in various stages of

illness, so sad was the condition of what they called that year "the unhealthful, depopulated, and ruined island." In the following April the Civilians were reduced to seven, and some of those were invalids. There were but six commissioned officers, two of whom were frequently ill, and not quite forty English soldiers. In May, the seven Civilians had dwindled to six, and these poor creatures, deeply depressed by a sense of their desolation, wrote: "It will be morally impossible to continue much longer from going under ground, if we have not a large assistance out before October/' In the next January Henry Coster of the accountants office was "wholly disabled by his unaccountable sottishness to hold a pen," and, although he could ill be spared, was dismissed. The Governor himself complains of his continued indisposition and want of assistance in that "very unhealthfull island;" yet he magnanimously assures the Directors that he feels bound in gratitude to exert himself, and inform them of all important matters, until he leaves the world or that place.

ANDERSON

*

July 30. (1823) I know not when I have been so shocked as I was last evening to have Mrs Newnham's death announced to me. She took Tiffin here last Thursday, had an attack of fever that night, expired last evening. Here people die one day and are buried the next. Their furniture sold the third, and they are forgotten the fourth . . . Oh Lord! preserve my husband to me.

Sept 22 (1825) We have just heard the melancholy news of the death of a poor young man here, a Mr Bax, so sudden that he was dead before his friends even knew that he was ill. He was to have dined with us to-day, and the bell tolling was the only way that we heard of it.

July 27. (1826) We heard this morning with awe and horror of the death of poor Mrs Wilson, only 32, a most amiable excellent Woman; she was only unwell a few days, and ill only 36 hours. These frequent sudden deaths make one tremble. The last year they have been quite awful.

Oct 28. (1826) Poor Mrs Ducat died yesterday morning, and was buried, her death, I have no doubt, hastened by the loss of 3 of her children in the last 10 months.

LADY WEST (*Note: Sir Edward West died on 17th Aug., 1828, and Lady West early in September of the same year.*)

*

"Mr Richard Edwards dyed (at Ballasore) suddenly the 6th in the morning, the Captains all supping with him at the factory the 5th at Night."

Letter dated 12th Nov., 1679, from the said Captains to Streynsham Master at Madras

*

... At sunrise on the next morning I beheld, for the last time, the coast of India, exactly eighteen years from my first arrival at Bombay. This diversified and interesting period of life I recollect with heartfelt delight; nor did I take a final view of the cloud-capt mountains of Malabar without strong and mingled sensations. Nineteen passengers had embarked from England in the same ship with myself, full of youthful ardour, and eager to obtain their respective situations in the Company's service. . . . Of the nineteen youths with whom I thus commenced my juvenile career, seventeen died in India many years before my departure; one only besides myself then survived ... he also has since fallen a sacrifice to the climate, and I have been for nearly ten years the only survivor!

FORBES(1784)

(Forbes went out at the age of 16 in 1765, and was only 35 when he retired: he lived to be 70.)

D. Tailpiece.

After all this inspissate gloom, let us close upon a brighter note—triplets and a centenarian, though 1 fear the latter does not bear a very typically British name.

On Thursday evening, at Madras, two hours after landing from the *Mornington*, from Masulipatam, the wife of James Clares, Matross of the second Battalion Artillery, was safely delivered of three children, one boy and two girls, who, with their mother, are in good health, and likely to do well.

Calcutta Gazette, 20th March, 1800

*

At Samulcottah, on the 29th ultimo Mrs Christiana Berg, aged 101 years 5 months and 16 days.

Calcutta Gazette, June, 1806

V—FOOD AND DRINK

Beyond splitting this section into its two obvious *and titular* components, I do not think there is anything to be said. *The appalling appetites of our forefathers—and indeed our foremothers—will be sufficiently demonstrated, though it is well to remember that only a fraction of what appeared on the table was actually consumed; the rest was waste. I have given more space to Food than to Drink because of the greater variety of the material; one must not, however, fall into the error of supposing that the Nabobs lived solely upon arrack punch as the early Sugar Kings of Jamaica lived upon rum. They had a great variety of wines, not only French, German and Spanish but also Persian; at one of his superlative parties Hickey was much annoyed because his guests preferred the latter to a special claret he had been at pains to procure. Persia supplied a great deal of the "loll shrub" (red wine) in which the Nabobs so delighted. There was also ale, and several impassioned paeans on this may be found which do not differ greatly from more modern versions composed in this and in other countries.*

I have arranged the extracts under the two sub-heads in chronological order.

A. Food

Each Day there is prepared a Publick Table for the Use of the President and the rest of the Factory, who sit all down in a publick place according to their Seniority in the Companies Service. The Table is spread with the choicest Meat *Suratt* affords, or the Country thereabouts; and equal plenty of generous *Sheraft* Wine, and *Arak* Punch, is serv'd round the Table. Several hundreds a Year are expended upon their daily Provisions which are sumptuous enough for the Entertainment of any Person of Eminence in the Kingdom; and which require two or three Cooks, and as many Butchers to dress and prepare them. But *Europe* Wines and *English* Beer, because of their former Acquaintance with our Palates, are most coveted and most desirable Liquors and tho' sold at high Rates, are yet purchased and drunk with pleasure. . . . And that nothing may be want-

ing to please the Curiosity of every Palate at the times of Eating, an *English*, *Portuguese*, and an *Indian* Cook, are all entertain'd to dress the Meat in different ways for the gratification of every Stomach. Palau, that is Rice boil'd so artificially, that every grain lies singly without being clodded together, with Spices intermixt, and a boil'd Fowl in the middle, is the most common *Indian* Dish; and a dumpok'd Fowl, that is, boil'd with Butter in any small Vessel, and stuff with Raisons and Almonds, is another. Cabob, that is Bief or Mutton cut into small pieces, sprinkled with Salt and Pepper, and dipt with Oil and Garlick, which have been mixt together in a Dish, and then roasted on a Spit, with sweet Herbs put between every piece, and stuff in them, and basted with Oil and Garlick all the while, is another *Indian* Savory Dish. Babou and Mangoe Achar, and Souy the choicest of all Sawces, are always ready to whet the Appetite. The Natives of *Suratt* are much taken with *Assa Fcetida*, which they call Hin, and mix a little of it with the Cakes they eat, which tho' very unpalatable and unsavoury, yet, because they esteem it beyond all things healthful, the *English* are tempted sometimes to taste it. The whole City sometimes smells very strong of the nauseating Vapours which flow from that abundance that is eat in it.

Upon *Sundays* and publick Days, the Entertainments keep up a Face of more Solemnity, and are made more large and splendid, Deer and Antilopes, Peacocks, Hares, Partridges, and all kinds of *Persian* Fruits, Pistachoes, Plumbs, Apricocks, Cherries, Etc. are all provided upon high Festivals; and *European* as well as *Persian* Wines are drunk with Temperance and Alacrity. Then the King's Health, and after-wards that of the Companies, are sent round the Table to the lowest Writer that sits down. When the Banquett is past, they generally divert themselves for a while with some Innocent easie Recreation.

OVINGTON (1690)

★

1

Nov. 3rd, 1775. A party at the Claverings with Sir E. Impey and lady The evening was stupid enough, and the supper detestable. Great joints of roasted goat, with endless dishes of cold fish. With respect to conversation, we had three or four songs screeched to unknown tunes; the ladies regaled with

cherrybrandy, and we pelted one another with bread pills *a la mode de Bengal**

Mackrabie's *Journal*

**For more on this curious "mode" see Hickey as quoted on p. 148. Bread pills, however, were nothing to the more robust practices of an earlier generation, for Mackrabie writes to a friend in 1774, "Formerly, instead of drinking a Glass of Wine with a Gentleman it was usual to throw a chicken at his Head—while the ladies pelted with Sweetmeats and Pastry. This was thought Refinement in Wit and Breeding"*

*

Calcutta 29th August 1780 We were very frequently told in England you know, that the heat in Bengal destroyed the appetite, I must own that I never yet saw any proof of that; on the contrary I cannot help thinking that I never saw an equal quantity of victuals consumed. We dine at two o'clock, in the very heat of the day. At this moment Mr F—is looking out with an hawk's eye, for his dinner; and though still much of an invalid, I have no doubt of being able to pick a bit myself. I will give you our bill of fare. . . . A soup, a roast fowl, curry and rice, a mutton pie, a fore quarter of lamb, a rice pudding, tarts, very good cheese, fresh churned butter, fine bread, excellent Madeira. . . . People here are mighty fond of grills and stews, which they season themselves, and generally make very hot. The Burdwan stew takes a deal of time; it is composed of everything at table, fish, flesh, and fowl. . . . Many suppose that unless prepared in a silver saucepan it cannot be good; on this point I must not presume to give an opinion, being satisfied with plain food; and never tasting any of these incentives to luxurious indulgence.

MRS FAY

*

Turtle

Any person having Turtle to dispose of, may hear of a purchaser by applying to Mr Creighton, at the Harmonic Tavern.

Calcutta Gazette, 9th December, 1784

*

At this meal (breakfast) the first morning I was surprised to see fried fish, in addition to the tea and coffee, and some **plates** containing, I thought, a sort of sausage, until it was recommended to me as a pleasant fruit, called the plantain.

TWINING (1792)

*

All the Indian fruits appear very large, and a new comer thinks them inferior in point of flavour to the European; as for the far-famed mangoes, I was disgusted with them, all those to be had at that time being stringy, with a strong taste of turpentine.

MRS PARKES (1822)

(Mrs Parkes later reversed her opinion of "the far-famed mangoes" on encountering some more favourable specimens.)

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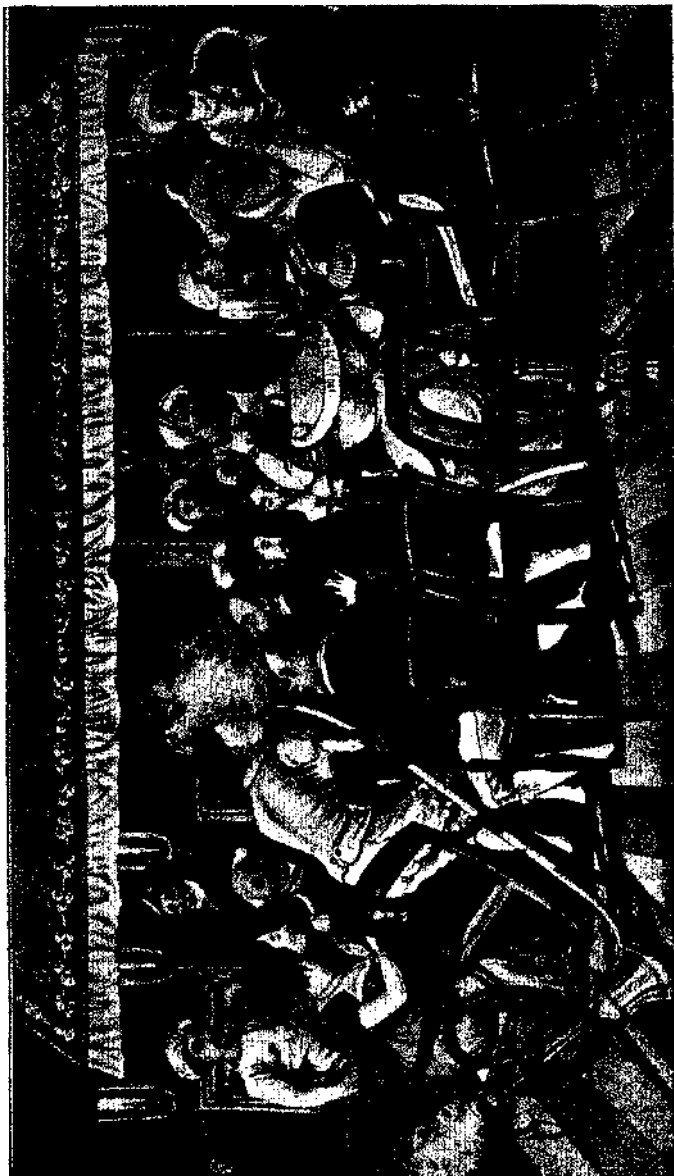
Dec 9 (1824) We dined yesterday at the Governor's (of Goa) and were received with the greatest possible state. . . . Our dinner exceeded in quantity anything I ever saw, not an inch of Table Cloth to be seen and all the Dishes cut up and brought round, that it makes it endless. This was all removed and then an equal quantity of cakes, fruits and sweet things were put on. The whole ceremony took up about an hour and a half. The Gentlemen moved from the Table with us and took a Segar, so I believe did the lady (the "Governess") slyly, as she invited me to do so.

LADY WEST

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*

Dec 25 (1825) Christmas Day. . . . We shall try and make it as cheerful as we can; I have ordered an English dinner, and we shall have champagne. Batt (Lady West's maid) will have as much party as she can, and I have a Snap Dragon in the evening.



The Sahib at Table

All our People have been to us to make *Salaam*, and we have ordered them all some Sheep for their Curries.

LADY WEST

*

A——whispered to me that I must eat as much as I could to please poor old Armagum; so I did my best, till I was almost choked with cayenne-pepper. The Moorman pillaws were very good; but among the Hindoo messes I at last came to something so queer, slimy, and oily, that I was obliged to stop.

Letters from Madras (1837)

(An experience in which many will sympathise with the Lady of the Madras Letters!)

*

You ask what shops we have. None at all; the butler buys everything in the bazaar or market, and brings in his biU every day. One of the Court native writers translates it into English, and very queer articles they concoct together! such as, "one beef of rump for biled;"—"one mutton of line beef for *alamoor estoo*," meaning *a-la-mode stew*;—"mutton for curry pups" (puffs);—"eggs for saps, snobs, tips, and pups" (chops, snipes, tipsycake, and puffs);—"mediation (medicine) for ducks;"—and at the end "ghirand totell" (grand total), and "howl balance."

Letters from Madras (1837)

*

Pomflets and rice at ten o'clock, form the usual Bombay breakfast; after which visiting commences, and continues until one, when the tiffin, and the siesta (its supposed successor) render every house sacred from foreign intrusion. The dinner tables are now admirably supplied; hecatombs of slaughtered animals have given place to lighter delicacies; and there are few European luxuries, which may not now be placed on the convivial board. Perigord pies, preserved meats, English vegetables,

and choice wines, are all procurable, and appear constantly at the tables of regular dinner-givers—a large class in the Presidency, where great hospitality still prevails in families whose allowances permit the necessary expenditure. The markets are well supplied; the mutton, beef, and veal of good quality; and the poultry, usually brought from the Portuguese settlement of Goa, is of a very superior kind, and may be purchased from itinerent dealers at a low price; fine ducks are sold at six shillings a dozen, and turkeys at an equally moderate charge. The oysters and prawns are excellent, and the delicate highly-flavoured pomflet is unrivalled; this fish, in form, resembles a small turbot, and is justly held at a high estimate by all bon vivants; it is occasionally caught by the fishermen on the Kattiawar coast, and other places, but inferior in size and quality, Bombay being preeminently distinguished for its pomflets, its shaddock, and its mangoes.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

*

These dinners at the Bengal Club are by no means so good as they are thought to be . . . but they are undoubtedly very cheerful contrasts to the meals on board ship or to the banquets at the dak bungalows. . . . The wines are admirably iced—the champagne dry and good, and the sherry wholesome. Curry of prawns, I will none of you! . . . Soup—never so pleasant as when 'tis hot in hottest weather; soup almost gelatinous in its strength, and gram-fed mutton and a fowl-curry; there, one is enough for me, but the gentlemen around me eat everything. They had tiffin at two; hot lunch and ale and brandy-pawnee. . . . A very social and agreeable sort of men, but their conversation is of mint, and anise, and cummin of Calcutta, which is to me of interest limited by amount of knowledge. A rubber terminates the evening. . . .

RUSSELL (1857)

*

We advise everyone who has not tasted a *roti* of one of these animals (porcupine) to do so *sine mord*, not, however, forgetting

to roll up the flesh in a layer of mutton fat, and thus to remedy its only defect—dryness.

BURTON (1847)

*

Such are Mrs Turmeric's (the Judge's Wife) official griefs. She has some also of a domestic nature. "Now this is really too bad," she says; "you see Mrs McGhee, the Chutneys, Dr Goley and ourselves, form a* Mutton Club, and we kill a sheep in turn; and it is quite shocking to see the scraggy stuff they send,—just like half-starved kid; and then they take my beautiful sheep, that have been three years on grain; and, what's more, when they do give a party, it is sure to be on 'Mrs Turmeric's killing-day.' I really must speak to Mrs Chutney; I don't believe she gives a particle of grain all the year round; and as for Mrs McGhee, she wants to palm off her nasty grass-fed sheep as the best flock in the club."

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

Look into that Oriental kitchen. If your eyes are not instantly blinded with the smoke, and if your sight can penetrate into the darkness, enter that hovel, and witness the preparation of your dinner. The table and the dresser, you observe, are Mother Earth; . . . the preparation for your dinner must therefore be performed in the earth's broad lap, like everything else in this Eastern land. As a matter of course, you will have curry, the standing dish of the East. There are the slaves busy at its preparation. The chase for the fowls has terminated in a speedy capture. Already the feathers are being stripped, and the mixture of the spicy condiments is in course of preparation. There, on his hams, is the attractive-looking assistant, grinding away the savoury stuff which is soon to adorn that scraggy chicken and to excite the palling appetite. There is the prime mover of the undertaking, trimming with a skilful hand the other domestic fowl, that has been immolated for cutlets. And a not over-alluring object is that head of the culinary department, I must confess—a venerable man with silvery locks. We entertain the most profound respect for grey hairs, but only when in their

legitimate sphere of utility. They grace the head of the aged; but there is an insecurity respecting them which in our humble view militates against the desirability of an ancient cook. . . .

Thus, you perceive, simplicity is the prevailing feature in an Indian kitchen. A spit, two native saucepans, a ladle, and a knife, comprise all the requirements of an Eastern cook. His grate is extemporised at a moment's warning with a lump of mud and a cruse of water. And if the cooks of the West have more costly and more extensive appliances, and laugh to scorn the rude apparatus of the Eastern Soyers, let them laugh triumphantly when they show that, even with their perfect means, they can turn out a better dinner, which we doubt.

Curry and Rice (1859)

★

First we had Mulligatawny soup,
Which made us all perspire,
For the cook, that obstinate nincompoop,
Had flavoured it hot as fire.

Next a tremendous fragmentary dish
Of salmon was carried in,—
The taste was rather of oil than fish,
With a palpable touch of tin.

Then, when the salmon was swept away,
We'd a ducky stew, with peas,
And the principal feature of that *entree*
Was its circumambient grease.

Then came the pride of my small farm-yard,—
A magnificent Michaelmas goose:
Heavens! his breast was a trifle hard;
As for his leg, the deuce!

Last, we'd a curry of ancient fowl:
In terror a portion I took,—
Hot?—I could hardly suppress a howl—
Curse that fiend of a cook.

★ ★ ★

Then there was sherry, and **handing round**
Of ginger and other fruits;
Then, in a silence quite profound,
The lighting of big cheroots.

Then came cards and soda-and-b.,
On to the snowy board;
And four of us made a whist partie,
And the little doctor snored.

Then there was brandy-pawnee round,
And the Parson ate some cake;
And the doctor snored with a horrible sound,
And choked himself awake.

Lastly, we each the other bored
With the usual district gup,
And then they departed. Oh, thank the Lord
The party had broken up!

*The Police-Wallah's Little Dinner: "Aliph
Cheem", (Lays of Ind., 1888)*

★

That we are leading the Simple Life I think you would admit if you saw us at our meals. I find that food really matters very little. Our cook is of the jungle jungly. Autolycus (her bearer) is disgusted with him, and does his best to reform him. Chota-hazri I have alone, as Boggley is away inspecting before seven o'clock. I emerge from my tent and find a table before Boggley's tent with a cloth on it—not particularly clean—a loaf of bread (our bread is made in jail: a chuprassi goes to fetch it every second day): a tin of butter, and a tin of jam. Autolycus appears accompanied by the jungly cook, bearing a plate of what under happier circumstances might have been porridge. A spoonful or two is more than enough. "No good?" demands Autolycus. "No," and disdainfully handing the plate back to the entirely indifferent cook, he proceeds to produce from somewhere about his person a tea-pot and two tiny eggs. Luncheon is much worse, for the food that appears is so incalculably greasy that it argues a more

than bowing acquaintance with native *ghee*. Dinner is luncheon intensified, so tea is really the only thing we can enjoy. The fact is if we thought about it we would never eat at all. I happened to walk round the tent to-day and found the dish-washer washing our dishes in water that was positively thick, and drying them with a cloth that had begun life polishing our brown boots. I stormed at him in English and later Boggley stormed at him in Hindustani, and he vowed it would never happen again, but I dare say if I were to look round at this minute, I should find him doing exactly the same thing; and I don't really care so long as neither of us perishes with cholera as a result.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1910)

B—Drink

(The Emperor) Akbar published a decree permitting intoxicating spirits to be sold to Europeans, because, he said, "they are born in the element of wine, as fish are produced in that of water", "and to prohibit them the use of it is to deprive them of life."

ANDERSON

*

As we came nearer *Swally*, Groves of *Br abb-Trees* present themselves; from whence the *Parseys* draw Wine a-kin to Toddy, which after the Sun is up, contracts an Eagerness with an heady Quality; so that these places are seldom free from Soldiers and Seamen of the *Moors'*, which sometimes meeting with ours, there happen bloody Frays, especially if the Quarrel be about Strumpets, who here ply for their Fares: The like disputes are sometimes among the *Europeans* themselves, and then they make sport for the *Parseys* upon the Trees, who have the diversion of the Combatants; as Boxing among the *English*; Sniker-Sneeing among the *Dutch*; ripping one anothers Bellies open with short Knives; Duelling with Rapiers among the *French*; Sword and Dagger among the *Portugals*.

FRYER (1673)

★

"if any man comes into a victualling house to drink punch, he may demand one quart of good Goa arak, half a pound of sugar, and half a pint of good lime water, and make his own punch. And if the bowle be not marked with the clerk of the market's seale, then the bowle may be freely broken without paying anything either for bowle or punch."

Order Book of the Bombay Government, 13th Aug., 1694

*

Several *Europeans* pay their Lives for their immoderate Draughts, and too frankly Carousing these chearful Liquors, with which when once they are inflam'd, it renders them so restless and unruly, especially with the additional heat of the Weather, that they fancy no place can prove too cool, and so throw themselves upon the ground, where they sleep all Night in the open Fields, and this commonly produces a Flux, of which a multitude in *India* die. The securest way here for preserving Health after an excess in drinking, and an intemperate draught of any strong liquor, is to keep close after it under some convenient Covering, and to digest it by keeping warm, and sleeping out the Fermentation.

OVINGTON (1690)

*

The liquor in which they (the early Europeans in India) ordinarily indulged was arrack, of which Bernier said that it was "a drink very hot and penetrant, like the brandy made of corn in Poland. It so falls upon the nerves, that it often causeth shaking hands in those that drink a little too much of it, and casts them into incurable maladies." "The soul of a feast, which is good wine," was to be found nowhere but in the English and Dutch Factories. At Ahmedabad and Golconda they had wine of fair quality, which had been made in the country, but it was usually imported from Shiraz or the Canaries at so great expense, that six or seven Crowns were charged for a bottle. What they called "pale punch"—a compound of brandy, rose water, lime-juice, and sugar—was also in great favour. So early as 1638,

when **tea** was unknown in England, it was much drunk in **the** Factory at Surat. "It acts as a drug," writes the traveller, (Mandelslo) who highly approved of the decoction, "for it cleanses the stomach, and dissipates the superfluous humours by a temperate heat peculiar to it."

ANDERSON

*

The party (at Colonel Sherbrooke's: Calcutta, 1797) consisted of eight as strong-headed fellows as could be found in Hindostan. During dinner we drank as usual, that is, the whole company each with the other at least twice over. The cloth being removed, the first half-dozen toasts proved irresistible, and I gulped them down without hesitation; at the seventh, feeling disposed to avail myself of the promised privilege (on account of Hickey's illness at the time) I only half filled my glass, whereupon our host said, "I should not have suspected you, Hickey, of shirking such a toast as the Navy," and my next neighbour observing, "it must have been a mistake," having the bottle in his hand at the time, he filled my glass up to the brim. The next round I made a similar attempt, with no better success, and then gave up the thought of saving myself. After drinking two-and-twenty bumpers in glasses of considerable magnitude, the *considerate* President said, everyone might then fill according to his own discretion, and so *discreet* were all of the company that we continued to follow the Colonel's example of drinking nothing short of bumpers until two o'clock in the morning, at which hour each person staggered to his carriage or his palankeen, and was conveyed to town. The next day was incapable of leaving my bed, from an excruciating headache, which I did not get rid of for eight-and-forty hours; indeed a more severe debauch I never was engaged in in any part of the world.

HICKEY (1797)

*

Soda Water, for the Hot Weather

. . . The medicinal qualities of this Water are so numerous, **and** of such importance, that the most eminent Physicians recom-

mend it, on account of the very great number of cases in which it has been highly beneficial, particularly in calculous complaints and in habitual stranguarie; and it is besides a cool and grateful beverage, particularly adapted for this climate. . . . In stone bottles, at Nine Rupees per dozen; READY MONEY.

Calcutta Gazette, 4th April, 1816

them. The Priest gave him a Reprimand in scurrilous Language, and the Gentleman using some tart Language to the Priest, that offended him, he let fly the sharp Dart of Excommunication, that pierced him so deep, that it cost him above 7 *L. Sterl.* to take it out again, and beg his Pardon on his Knees before the Archbishop, before he could be absolved. . . .

Of all the Churches in or about *Goa* none is honoured with Glass-windows, but one in the city, dedicated to *St. Alexander*, for the rest are served with clear Oyster-shell Lights, that are far inferior to Lights of Glass. And all their stately Houses are furnished with Oyster-shell Lights.

HAMILTON (1702)

*

Calcutta 28th August (1781) . . . I have never mentioned yet how indifferently we are provided with respect to a place of worship; divine service being performed, in a room (not a very large one) at the Old Fort; which is a great disgrace to the settlement. They talk of building a church and have fixed on a very eligible spot whereon to erect it but no further progress has been made in the business.

MRS FAY

(St John's Church was begun in 1783 and Mrs Fay found it there on a later visit to Calcutta.)

*

There was then (1805) no church in *Dinapore*, but the service was performed in a large, empty quarter, a wide and lofty room, with a number of double doors of green lattice-work. There was no other furniture than forms for the inferior persons, and chairs and footstools set by their own servants for the superiors. There was nothing like a pulpit or desk; the preacher stood before a table. In the cold season the service was before breakfast. The regiment was marched to the place appointed, the band sometimes playing. The soldiers' wives attended also, dressed completely in white, and many of them looking very well. Of course they walked to church, carrying painted umbrellas over their heads, for they wore no bonnets, but caps

neatly trimmed. The higher ranks all came in carriages of some kind, and as the civilians came from Bankipore and other neighbouring places, the square was littered with vehicles of all possible descriptions. Every lady was dressed in white, with a fine lace cap or veil, and each one was led to her seat by some gentleman, for such was the Indian custom. Even when a lady came alone, she was no sooner seen coming from her carriage or palanquin, than some gentleman would leave his place in the church, run to meet her, and hand her in.* . . . But as to any benefit we might have received from the sermon, there was none whatever, for Dr. S———was a most easy, careless, and ignorant person, as were many of the chaplains then in the Upper Provinces.

MRS SHERWOOD (1805)

*(*When a shipload of spinsters arrived from England, we are told, there was considerable competition for this gallantry which was considered a full and sufficient introduction.)*

*

Caution

Bandel, 10th November, 1804

Every person present at Bandel Church while divine service is performing from the 15th to the 24th current, are requested to behave with every due respect as in their own Churches; on the contrary, they shall be compelled to quit the temple immediately, without attending the quality of person.

Calcutta Gazette, 15th November, 1804

*

On the Sunday, I went to the church at Byculla. It is certainly very unlike a church in England. . . . Outside the church, close to the walls, and at equal distances from each other, stood several natives. What could they be there for? curiosity perhaps had attracted them to see the 'Governor Sahib' attend his place of worship. I soon discovered the reason of their presence. They were to pull the punkas, which were inside the church.... There

were separate punkas for the clergyman in the reading-desk and for the preacher in the pulpit. . . . The pews are very narrow and I was astonished to find arm-chairs instead of what are called 'seats' . . . The pews are so contracted, and the doors so unnecessarily small, that a large woman, with her own breadth, and eight breadths of silk besides, must find it difficult to enter one of them. I heard of a lady, the folds of whose gown were so ample, that on one occasion, after having, with difficulty, succeeded in settling herself in the pew at the commencement of the service, she found, on its conclusion, her stiff dress so entangled in the arms of her chair, that she could not move; and there the poor thing remained, perfectly helpless, her position becoming every moment more embarrassing, till a kind neighbour came to her assistance, and extricated her from her painful predicament.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

It was too hot to kneel I found,—judging by what I saw around me, in the hot season—and, indeed, at all seasons in Calcutta, people dispense with kneeling altogether in churches. Standing is a relief after a long interval of listless sitting repose, and stand they will accordingly, but, with the exception of a few enthusiastic ladies, who like to obtain a reputation for sanctity, and to keep it when obtained, none knelt.

KNIGHTON (1855)

*

It was a truly lamentable, and, at the same time, a strange sight. The vast majority of those for whom the sermon was intended, and who could have understood all of it that was at all intelligible, were fast asleep; whilst those who knew nothing of the language, and who could not therefore profit by it in the least, were actively and wakefully employed in adding to the comfort of the sleepers (by pulling the punkahs)—Altogether a more truly melancholy spectacle than this outrageous burlesque of devotion, it would not have been easy to parallel elsewhere. To judge by the fashionable Calcutta church, religion was a mere

ceremonial mockery—an ingenious contrivance for passing away one day in the week in strange contrast with the others. . . . Drowsy discourses, ill-prepared, or not prepared at all, and drowsy congregations who listened to little of them, the rule—neither an energetic preacher, nor a wakeful audience, was to be found in the fashionable church in the City of Palaces at that time.

KNIGHTON (1855)

*

So close to the sacred pile, let us step in and explore its architectural beauties. . . . This, then, is the steeple; but "the soft sweet chimes of the Sabbath bells, that so peacefully float from afar!*** peal only in the lively imagination. The calling to prayers at Kabob is effected by a less elaborate process: a heathen, "simple and unadorned**", scales recklessly the lofty walls, through the instrumentality of an infirm ladder, and then and there bangs spasmodically on a discordant gong, until "Our Padre" is attired in his vestments, when the lamplighter . . . rushes frantically forth, and shouts, "No more, no more.**" Mark the interior economy of the structure: that timber receptacle, which does double duty . . . of pulpit as well as of reading-desk—those communion rails, that table now bereft of its cover, that font. Observe the purity of the ecclesiastical style of architecture selected, obviously the early Indian or Carpenteresque, one of the periods of the "Disappointed Gothic." . . .

Come in and see Ginger ("Our Padre*") in his bungalow; he will give you a hearty welcome and some excellent bitter beer. His sanctum will recall your college days,—gowns, guns and hunting-whips promiscuously combine: here a MS. sermon lies complacently by a cookery-book and a *Bell's Life*; while there a packet of letters and a prospectus of the Sky races, with the hospital report and a receipt for milk-punch.

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

A new magazine is just advertised as coming out at Madras. It is to be conducted by some of the clergymen, in opposition to

another periodical, conducted by some others of the clergymen.

The first number **is to** contain strictures **on** a review which appeared last month in the other magazine. I grudge the waste of time and thought upon such useless work. The writers come out here, they themselves, and everybody else, believing they will work among the Heathen; and while the Idol services are going on all round them, they sit writing their reviews and anti-reviews to the sound of the Pagoda bell!

Letters from Madras (1838)

*

The popular account of Bhuddism which follows I regard with some distrust, as it reached me through the translations of some missionaries, who seem to have falsified, or at least exaggerated, some of the absurdities of that system, in order to obtain a stronger hold over the minds of their proselytes, very few of whom are learned enough to have recourse to their books in the originals for information, and therefore quietly acquiesce in the belief that Bhud and Satan are one and the same person; while their spiritual guides impress on their minds the sinfulness of worshipping the devil. Even the Maha Modeliar, who is a Dutch Protestant, though a man of sense, is so possessed with this idea, that he would fain have dissuaded us from going into the temple, where there were only some devils, as he called the images of the gods.

MARIA GRAHAM (1810)

*

. . . We had heard that two Missionaries were established there (Narsapoor), and we wanted to see them, and learn how they went on, and whether there was anything we could do to make them more comfortable. They were English shoemakers, Mr. Bowden and Mr. Beer, dissenters of Mr. Grove's class, but good, innocent, zealous creatures, and in the way to be very useful. They have two pretty, young English wives, as simple as themselves. They are living completely among the natives, teaching and talking to them, and distributing books. One of them is a man of great natural talent, strong-headed, and clear



The Sahib at Work

and sensible in his arguments; if he had been educated, he would probably have turned out a very superior person. They complained much of the difficulties of the language; but A——says that the two men spoke it really much better than the general run of Missionaries. One of the wives said to me very innocently, "It is pertickly difficult to us, ma'am, on account of our never having learnt any language at all. I don't know what to make of the grammar." I advised her not to trouble herself with the grammar but just to try and learn to speak the language so as to converse with the natives—to learn it, in short, as a child learns to talk. At her age, and without any education, it was next to impossible for her to learn the grammar of an Oriental language; but I do not suppose she will follow my advice, as she had a great notion of studying, Moonshees, and so on. They live almost like the natives, without either bread or meat, but they have rice, fish, fowls, and vegetables, and they say, "The Lord has brought down our appetites to what he gives us to feed them on."

Letters from Madras (1838)

*

We have had the English service now (at Rajaharcendry) for the last month, and mean to continue it regularly; A—— officiates, as is the custom when there is no clergyman: all the English residents attend very regularly, and some half-caste Protestants. There is a Roman Catholic half-caste dresser, or surgeon's assistant, named Rozer, father to Sergeant Reeling's wife: there is a little Roman Catholic chapel under his care, and he takes a great deal of pains about it, poor soul! keeping it clean, lighting the candles, and putting flowers before the images, though there is no priest living here, nor any one to notice him. When our service was announced, he sent a message to ask if he might be present at it, but when the day arrived he never appeared; and, on making inquiry, we found from the Sergeant that poor Rozer himself was very anxious to attend, but was afraid of a reprimand from some distant priest who occasionally comes here in the course of his travels.

Letters from Madras (1837)

25th December, 1836. I am determined to write one line, dearest, on Christmas-day, to wish you and yours many, many happy returns of the day, and that some of them find us together again; and in the meanwhile I was thinking at church to-day what an unspeakable comfort the communion of Christmas is; how the feeling that we were all commemorating the birth of the same Saviour,' with the same rites, and on the same day, brought us all together, even at the distance of half the globe. One part of the service was entirely thrown away on me. I beg to observe the Psalms, as usual, did not agree with my complaint. 'Hearken! oh daughter, and consider; incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house.' I never think David quite understood what he was writing about. The more I hearken and consider, the more I feel that my own people and my father's house are the very points I never can forget. I never thought so much of them before. Last Christmas we were at sea; this Christmas in Bengal; the next I suppose at Allahabad; and so on till we have a Christmas in Egypt, and the next to that at B——Hall.

I want to go home, please.

MISS EDEN (1836)

VII—HOMES, HOSTELS AND CARAVANSERAIS

In this section we proceed from the domesticated to the nomadic. We also proceed along a downward scale of comfort; for in India the Home is better than the Club which is better than the Hotel which is better than the Travellers' Bungalow which is better than the Tent—though on this last, even if the Travellers' Bungalow be a good one, there are two opinions. In reading the record of the Sahibs it is always well to consider whether the particular contributor had his own Home (or the entree to the Homes of others) or whether he was dependent on accommodations open to the public. It would indeed be interesting to compare the outlook and views on India of representative Sahibs who have passed their time, wholly or mainly, in the classes of residence shown under sub-heads A to D of this section; and to consider the allowances and set-offs which should fairly be made in each particular case. There would certainly be some.

A—Homes

The style of an Indian House differs altogether from that of one in England. The floors are entirely covered with Indian matting, than which nothing can be cooler or more agreeable. For a few weeks in the cold season, fine Persian carpets, or carpets from Mirzapore are used. The windows and doors are many; the windows to the ground, like the French; and, on the outside, they are also protected by Venetian windows of the same description. The rooms are large and lofty, and to every sleeping-apartment a bathing-room is attached. All the rooms open into one another, with folding doors, and panhkas are used during the hot weather. The most beautiful French furniture was to be bought in Calcutta of M. de Bast, at whose shop marble tables, fine mirrors and luxurious couches were in abundance. . . .

MRS PARKES (1822)

*

In the first place, an Indian bungalow is as exquisitely simple in construction as an English house is complex. It is not built

to please the eye of man, but to shield his body from a merciless sun; and this it does far more effectually than an average English house shields him from the cold. Houses in Bombay and the more southern Provinces are less ponderously severe of build; but a Punjab bungalow is a mere rectangular block, white- or colour-washed according to its owner's fancy, divided and subdivided into rooms opening one into the other by means of multitudinous doors, or by the simpler device of curtained openings in the Wall. Windows there are none, save the wire-netted slits in the wall, fifteen or twenty feet up, and glass doors are only found in the larger, better-finished houses. Here, then at one fell swoop, is the Anglo-Indian housewife rid of a host of minor worries that harrow the souls of her English sisters. For here are neither staircases nor passages to keep in order; neither blinds nor sashes to repair; no windows to be cleaned; no gas-pipes to leak; no water-pipes to freeze; no boilers to burst; no grates to polish—for an Indian fireplace is but a white-washed cavity in the wall; and (greatest boon of all) no futile struggles to feed and humour those "daughters of the horse-leech" who call themselves "experienced" maid-servants.

MAUD DIVER (1909)

★

20th Dec. 1774. The expenses of this settlement are beyond all conception. Mr F(rancis) pays L. 500 a year for a large, but rather mean House or rather Barn, with bare Walls and not a single Glass window.

21st Feb. 1776. We have at last engaged a Capital House, the best in Town; but such a rent. L.100 p. month, enormous! . . . There is a drawing-room on the upper story above fifty feet long, a dining-room below as large, besides two spacious Halls and a suite of three rooms upon each floor to the East and West. That is, fourteen rooms in all. 'Tis by far the largest, loftiest, and most superb House in the Place.

Mackrabie's *Journal*

(But Francis in a contemporary letter home said ungratefully, "the devil take me if I would not exchange the best Dinner and the

best Company I ever saw in Bengal for a Beefsteak and Claret at the Horn, and let me choose my company")

*

Dr. Anderson's House (in Madras) was built in a garden, beautifully laid out in the English taste; but from its abounding with trees and shrubs and flowers, such as are not known in Europe except in conservatories and hot-houses, it had to our unaccustomed eyes a very aristocratic appearance. The house which was very large, and encrusted with chunam, was built on open pillars, about eight feet high, and presented large cool arcades under the house. The building itself was on a grand scale, consisting of two stories, the roof being flat and protected with balustrades, the verandahs, the porticoes, and the palm-trees, which grew close to the house, giving to the whole the appearance of one of those enchanted castles of which I had read so often in Oriental tales.

We were ushered into a vast hall, where breakfast was laid out on a very long table as for a very large party. On no nobleman's table in England would have been seen a finer display of silver, china, glass, and delicate napery, which, with fruits and flowers in rich profusion, mixed with every delicacy for the palate, gave us the first view we ever had had of anything like the Indian style of living.

MRS SHERWOOD (1805)

*

.... To return to the description of the house. You enter it at one end of a viranda, which goes round four sides of a large square hall where we dine; on each side of the inner apartment are large glass doors and windows, so that we can admit or exclude the air as we please. The viranda ... is about twenty feet wide, and one side of it is one hundred feet long; the roof is supported by low arches, which are open to the garden. At one angle of the square formed by the viranda is the drawing-room, which has likewise a viranda on three sides, the fourth having a large bow-window overlooking the garden. The offices are connected with the house by a covered passage, and are concealed by thick shrubbery. Most of the country-houses

in Bombay have but one story; ours has two. The bedrooms above are **well** lighted and aired, and have glass windows with **the** Venetian shutters, which are only used in the rainy season, or during the land winds, which are cold and dry, and are said to give rheumatisms and cramps, with swelling, if they blow upon one while sleeping. Our garden is delightful; the walks are cut in the wood on the side of the hill, and covered with small sea-shells from the beach of Back Bay, instead of gravel, which, besides the advantage of drying quickly in the rainy season, are said to keep off snakes, whose skins are easily wounded by the sharp edges of the broken shells. . . . At one end of this walk are chunam (stucco) seats, under some fine spreading trees, with the fruit-walk to the right hand, and to the left flower-beds filled with jasmine, roses, and tuberose, while the plumbago rosea, the red and white ixoras, with the scarlet wild mulberry, and the oleander, mingle their gay colours with the delicate white of the moon-flower and the mogree. The beauty and fertility of this charming garden is kept up by constant watering from a fine well near the house. The water is raised by a wheel worked by a buffalo. . . .

MARIA GRAHAM (1809)

(This house was "on the side of a hill, on the west side of Bombay.")

*

Feb 3 (1823) • • • We anchored last evening . . . I went to see our House, with which I was much disappointed, not as to its size for it is immense, more like a Barn; in fact it looked unfurnished and wretched, but I hope I shall be able to make it more comfortable. We had a party of 24 to Dinner.

LADY WEST

•

I am quite well again now, thank you, and have begun riding and walking again, and the climate, the place, and the whole thing is quite delightful, and our poor despised house, that everybody abused, has turned out the wonder of Simla. We

bought carpets, and chandeliers, and wall shades (the great staple commodity of India furniture), from Calcutta, and I have got a native painter into the house, and cut out patterns in paper, which he then paints in borders all round the doors and windows, and it makes up for the want of cornices, and breaks the eternal white walls of these houses. Altogether it is very like a cheerful middle-sized English country-house, and extremely enjoyable.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

During the hot season, the (Bombay) Esplanade is adorned with pretty, cool, temporary residences, erected near the sea; their chuppered roofs and rustic porches half concealed by the flowering creepers and luxuriant shrubs, which shade them from the mid-day glare.

These bungalows are situated in line, with spaces between each, at a convenient distance from the road; the material of which they are made is simply bamboo and plaster, lined with strained dungaree, dyed a pale straw colour; the offices are placed at a short distance from the bungalow; and the whole is enclosed with a pretty compound, filled with fine plants, arranged in tubs, round the trellised verandahs: in this situation the shrubs flourish well, despite their vicinity to the sea, usually considered so inimical to the labours of horticulturists. . . .

It is difficult to imagine anything more agreeable than a late dinner in an esplanade bungalow, after returning from the evening drive.

The clean smooth China matting which covers the floors; the numerous lamps shedding their equal light from the snowy ceilings; the sweet perfume of the surrounding plants, and the fresh sea breeze, blowing through the trellis-worked verandahs, render them delightful retreats after the heat and lassitude endured throughout the day. Elegance combines with comfort, in making these pretty abodes so truly pleasant; and a fine-toned piano, and a good billiard table, are the usual additions to varied articles of luxury and convenience. The upholsterers and cabinet makers of Bombay are too good workmen to allow any want to be unprovided for, in the decorations of a drawing-room or boudoir. The jackwood in common use is a good

material, resembling mahogany; and the blackwood, when handsomely carved and well polished, is little inferior to dark coloured rose-wood.

It is true, that a very unfurnished effect is produced by the unadorned walls of a drawing-room in India, wall shades being a bad exchange for either handsome paintings, or richly framed mirrors: yet when the fitness of things is considered, a stranger soon recognises the advantages of cool, well strained dungaree walls, which afford no attraction to the depredating presence of loathsome insects seeking what they may devour.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

*

The house ("The Priory" at Simla) consists of the usual one story. A long verandah runs in front, separated from the edge of the plateau by a narrow strip of neglected flower-garden. The hall is tolerably large; on the left is the dining-room, on the right is the sitting-room; each of these has a small suite of two sleeping-rooms and one bath-room attached to it, which fill up the quadrangle of the bungalow. At the back there is a long row of stone huts, and numerous dirty offices for servants. The roof is of shingle; the furniture very fair and substantial.

RUSSELL (1858)

*

The Neilgherry house merits description principally because it is a type of the life usually led in it. The walls are made of coarse bad bricks—the roof of thatch or wretched tiles, which act admirably as filters, and occasionally cause the downfall of part, or the whole of the erection. The foundation usually selected is a kind of platform, a gigantic step, cut out of some hill-side, and levelled by manual labour. . . . As regards architecture the style bungalow—a modification of the cow-house—is preferred: few tenements have upper stories, whilst almost all are surrounded by a long low verandah, perfectly useless in such a climate, and only calculated to render the interior of the domiciles as dim and gloomy as can be conceived. The furniture is decidedly scant, being usually limited to a few feet of drugget,

a chair or two, a table, and a bedstead. The typical part of the matter is this. If the diminutive rooms, with their fire-places, curtained beds, and boarded floors, faintly remind you of Europe, the bare walls, puttyless windows and doors that admit draughts of air small yet cutting as lancets, forcibly impress you with the conviction that you have ventured into one of those uncomfortable localities—a cold place in a hot country.

BURTON (1847)

*

Rika was rather a revelation. The civilians' bungalows have a here-we-have-no-continuing-city look about them; their owners are constantly being moved, and pitching their moving tents elsewhere; but the Royles have been at Rika for fifteen years and have made a delightful home. The bungalow is built on a slightly rising ground with a verandah all round—a verandah made pleasant with comfortable chairs, rugs, writing-tables, books and flowers. At one end a dirzee squats with a sewing-machine, surrounded by white stuff in various stages of progress for the Mem-sahib and the children. From the middle of the verandah a broad flight of steps, flanked on either side by growing plants in pots, leads down to the road, and across the road lie the tennis-lawns and the flower-garden. I have read that one of the most pathetic things about this Land of Exile is the useless effort to make English flowers grow. In Rika they must feel at home, for the whole air is scented with roses and mignonette.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

B—Clubs and Hotels

The European confectioners' coffee-houses (in Calcutta) are the great resorts of the idle Anglo-Indians during the heat of the day. They are . . . kept as cool as possible; within, marble floors and tables, and perpetual breezes, caused by constantly swinging fans, forming a delightful contrast to the red-brick dust, the painful glow and intense heat without. Ices and sherry-cobblers are the articles most in demand in the day-time in these establishments; all kinds of American drinks are to be had at all times, and the quantity of ice used in the concoction of such drinks, renders them great favourites in India.

The familiar faces of the principal London periodicals meet our eyes upon every table . . . mingled with Indian newspapers of various names and as various type and appearance . . . and whilst the visitors divide *Punch* or the *Hurkaru*, the *Times* or the *Purnochundodroy* between them, the waiter flies off to supply their wants.

KNIGHTON (1855)

*

Let us go over to the Simla club. It is nightfall, for the last moments of the day are absorbed in the canter round Jacko, the closing gallop down the mall, billiards, the racket-court, the library, or lounging from one shop to another. Lights are gleaming from the long row of windows in the bungalow. Syces holding horses and jampaneers sitting in groups by their master's chairs, are clustering round the verandah. . . . The clatter of plates and dishes proclaims that dinner is nearly ready. The British officers and civilians, in every style of Anglo-Indian costume, are propping up the walls of the sitting-room, waiting for the signal to fall on. . . . Dinner is announced, and the members and guests file into a large room with a table well laid out with flowers and plated epergnes. . . . The dinner is at all events plentiful enough, the pastry and sweets being, perhaps, the best department. . . . Among Anglo-Indians the practice of drinking wine with each other has not yet died out, and the servants are constantly running to and fro with their masters' compliments, bottles, and requests to take wine with you, which are generally given to the wrong persons and produce much confusion and amusement.

Cheroots follow closely on the removal of the last jelly . . . whist parties are formed and set to work in the inner room, and the more jovial of the gentlemen proceed to the execution of vocal pieces such as were wont to be sung in Europe twenty years ago. . . . The "fun" grows louder and faster as the night advances. . . . There is a crash of glass, and a grand row at the end of the room, and the Bacchanalians rising with much exultation, seize "Ginger Tubbs" in his chair and carry him round the room as a fitting ovation for his eminent performance of the last comic ballad, and settle down to "hip-hip-hurrah, and one

cheer more" till they are eligible for their beds or for "a broiled bone" at old Brown's. . . .

RUSSELL (1857)

*

The rooms at the Byculla (Club) (in Bombay) are large and lofty and the windows all open to the ground, so that there is always a delicious breeze through them. The gardens were ablaze with poinsettias, red and yellow. . . . But, lovely as all this was, the sight of our breakfast appealed still more to our feelings. A broiled pomfret and a Byculla prawn curry are things to live for, and are themselves worth all the journey to Bombay. The first is a delicious flat fish, more delicate than anything I have ever tasted, the nearest approach I can make being that it seems like a cross between a flounder and a brook-trout. I believe it is to be found only near Bombay. . . . With these two dishes, some small iced tomatoes, the size of grapes, and winding up with some of those delicious, loose-jacketed Indian oranges, we felt as if all the world went smoothly with us.

LARKING (1886)

*

Every family visiting Bombay, must feel the great inconvenience of there being neither a hotel, or other place of public accommodation, at which they can put up, in the event of their not possessing an acquaintance, whose hospitality they may venture to claim; and this position, however awkward and perplexing, is one in which individuals are very commonly placed, who have long been residents at a distance from the Presidency. The Victoria Hotel solicits the patronage of travellers; but, as it is situated in the very dirtiest and very narrowest street of the fort, the additional annoyances of flights of mosquitoes, a billiard table, a coffee and a tap room, place it without the pale of respectable support. The Sanitarium affords shelter to invalids, and is delightfully situated, where the smooth sands and fine sea-breeze render it a tempting locality for the convalescent; but the rooms are far too small for family accommodation. In this dilemma, visitors usually pitch tents on the espla-

nade; and if in the hot season, cause them to be *chuppered in*, as the phrase is, or a false roof erected with bamboos and date leaves, to secure them equally from the intense heat of the mid-day sun, and the evil effects of the evening dews.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

*

Hotels in India, are a difficulty. I cannot speak of them in superlative terms. For one fairly comfortable you will find six you are glad to leave behind. Two which circumstances compelled me to stay in I have ever since mentally termed "The Piggery" and "The Knavery." I know not which exceeded the other in the qualities which prompted these designations. The "Piggery," I rejoice to say, has changed hands: may it also change character. The "Knavery" still exists, and as is the custom with the green bay tree, has a fair and flourishing exterior, but I live in hopes still that I shall hear of its conversion to the paths of sincerity and honesty.

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

Denmark Hotel and Tavern, Serampore

. . . Gentlemen passing up and down the river may be accommodated with breakfast, dinner, supper and lodging, and may depend on the charges being very reasonable, as terms are ready money.

To prevent mistakes or imposition, the prices of every thing will be publicly placed in each of the rooms, with a daily bill of fare etc etc.

Dinners dressed and sent out at short notice; also liquors sold by the single dozen, for ready cash. A good Billiard Table and Coffee-room, with the Newspapers, etc.

An ordinary on Sundays at 3 Sicca Rupees each.

N.B.—The road from Serampore to Gyretty House is now repairing for carriages.

Calcutta Gazette, 16th March, 1786

*

It was 8.50 a.m. ere the gharrys reached "Parker's Hotel", a large pretentious bungalow, in a compound in the lines of Umballah. . . . At Parker's there is a large *salle à manger*', with French clocks and English engravings. Our breakfast had neither French cookery nor English comfort to recommend it. Although the furniture was good, the want of tatties, and the presence of flies and mosquitoes, rendered the rooms hot and aggravating.

RUSSELL (1857)

*

It surprises me to note how bad Indian hotels are as a rule. . . . The few I stayed in, with the exception of the Royal Hotel at Lucknow, were horrible and filthy places. Watson's Hotel at Bombay is about as uncomfortable a hostelry as is to be found anywhere in the civilised world, yet everyone goes there because it is the best in the place. Everyone grumbles, and I only wonder noone has the enterprise to establish a really first-rate hotel at Bombay, for I am confident a fortune might be made out of it.

LARKING (1886)

(The idea has since occurred to others !)

C—Travellers' Bungalows

But here we are at last, thank Heaven!—at the "Travellers' Bungalow." We extricate ourselves from the palankeen, which is borne into the verandah, and our immediate wants are instantly the source of anxious solicitude on the part of the "sweetly smiling, sweetly talking" slaves. That venerable patriarch of self-complacent mien is the purveyor of the institution, and with unbounded largeness of views . . . interrogates us as to our requirements, which he can meet to any extent. . . . Hot rolls and buttered toast, cold ham and sausages, raised pie, and other delicacies, float before our imagination. But the horrid heathen, the vile pagan, destroys our dream of hope . . . and we discover that hot water for our tea, a grilled fowl, and an unfermented cake, is "all the store that he can give to me." . . .

The hours lag long and wearily; the punkah, of limited

dimensions, with a deranged flounce and with unsymmetrical ropes, waggles with a quaint and threatening aspect, and affords but little mitigation of the burning heat. . . . We lie recumbent on the cot, which has the authorised and popular number of legs, of which the chairs cannot be said to boast;—we have dozed;—we have read the regulations that hang upon the walls forty times at least;—we have drunk tepid beer, and warm soda-water has allayed our thirst;—we have recorded our names in the book of fate and of the Bungalow; when, at last, upon a grateful ear the sounds of the relieving palankeen-bearers announce that the sun has set and that the hour of departure is at hand.

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

Whilst I was cursing my fate at being in such an uncomfortable place, my boy announced the manager of the dak bungalow, who came to inform me that he now had a vacant room, which I agreed to go and see as soon as I was dressed. Off we went accordingly; but, on getting there, the first thing that met our eyes was a police-officer packing up and sealing luggage in the room that was to be mine.

I asked him what was the matter and he quietly answered, "A gentleman died here last night. We are moving his things. The body was taken away just now, and the room will be ready for you gentlemen in ten minutes."

LARKING (1886)

*

Nowadays there are so many Travellers* Bungalows in the ordinary district that the tents of our forefathers, like their horses, are becoming a thing of the past—though it goes without saying that your own nice tent is infinitely preferable to the poorer type of Travellers* Bungalow which has a leaky roof, no punkah and many, many inhabitants. . . . If the Devil were to come to the Civilian and say to him, "Sell me your soul, and you shall instantly know the stories of all Travellers* Bungalows and everything that has happened in them," the Civilian would succumb; for indeed to know that would be far more interesting

! than having a soul, and even if one kept one's soul after such knowledge it would be in such a state as to be of little service to any one. . . . The Civilian has slept in rooms which have told him in the watches of the night that they have seen men blow their brains out over that very table or die one or other of the horrible Indian deaths in that very bed. . . . Strange, strange places are Travellers' Bungalows, and the Civilian does honestly believe that they contain within their plain and inornate walls more of the history of our people in India than any monument in the land. . . . There they stand hiding and treasuring up in themselves the most wonderful and sinister stories in the world.

The Civilian's South India (1915)

*

D— Tents

Our life in tents was very agreeable, and I believe the whole party was sorry the next march would bring us to Alligarh, and once more into the form and stupidity of life in a house; for myself, the idea of having any roof over my head but that of a tent fell like a nightmare on my spirits.

MRS PARKES (1838)

*

I don't know if I really like a tent to live in. The floor is covered with straw, and then carpet is stretched over it which makes a particularly bulgy, uneven surface to stand dressing-tables and things on. The straw, too, is apt to stick out where it is least expected, and gives one rather the feeling of being a tinker sleeping in a barn. At night a tent is an awesome place. It is terrible to have no door to lock and to be entirely at the mercy of anything that creeps and crawls; to have only a mosquito net between you and an awful end. I woke last night to hear something sniffing outside the tent. It scraped and scraped and I was sure that it was digging a hole and creeping underneath the canvas. I sat up in bed and in a quavering voice said "Go away" and the noise stopped, but only to begin again—scrape, scrape, snuffle, snuffle in the most eerie way. Then something worse happened. At my very ear, as it seemed, the most

blood-curdling yell rent the astonished air. It was only a jackal, Boggley says, but it sounded as if all the forces of evil had been let loose at once. You can laugh if you like, but I think it was enough to frighten a very Daniel.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

VIII—COMMUNICATIONS

A—His Majesty's Mail

It is now more than Seven Months since I saw the last Sails of the Atlas as they melted into nothing; and another must pass before even by the most favourable Calculation I can hope to hear from you by the Royal Charlotte which I have supposed will bring your Letters from St. Helena.

Warren Hastings to his Wife; Lucknow 13th Aug., 1784. (Endorsed by Mrs H. "Received April 18th, 1785")

(One talks glibly of the remoteness of India in the eighteenth century ; to realise what it meant , it is necessary to put oneself in the place of Hastings—who was passionately devoted to his wife—and of many others like him. Eight months to learn that one's family had got even as far as St Helena!)

*

To the English gentleman in Yorkshire or Northumberland, who at that distance from the metropolis sits down to a perusal of the *Times* the same day that it is published, it will appear almost incredible that a letter I wrote from Allahabad to Futtehghur (not more than two hundred miles) was over *sixty days* in reaching its destination, having, I believe, visited *en route* Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

MAJENDIE (1859)

*

We have just received all your letters, which were more welcome than ever letters were before. In England, with your daily post, you little know the eagerness with which we poor Indians look out for our monthly despatch, nor the delight with which we receive it. For some days before the mail is expected all Madras is in a fever, speculating, calculating, hoping, almost praying,

that it may arrive a few days, or even a few hours, before the usual time; and when it is known to be "in," the news travels like wildfire in all directions; peons are despatched from every compound to wait at the post-office and bring the letters the instant they are given out, in order to gain an hour upon the general postmen; all other interests and occupations are forgotten; and many people will receive no visits, if there should chance to be any unfortunate beings so letterless as to be able to pay them.

Letters from Madras (1837)

*

The Madras Dawk (post) of the 20th ultimo arrived in town (Calcutta) yesterday, in fourteen days and a half, which is uncommonly expeditious.

Calcutta Gazette, 6th May, 1790

*

... A Gentleman who belongs to Bombay has completed a plan for telegraphic communication between that Presidency and Fort William. He proposes, wind and weather permitting, to convey a sentence in six minutes and a half. ... He has computed that 70 or 80 stations will be sufficient for the chain, and the whole expence is, for such an undertaking, very moderate. The machinery is simple, being an enormous black triangle moved on a pivot, and the secret is wholly in the cypher to be used. Major Young is now superintending some experiments, made to prove the value of the invention, to which we cordially wish the most complete success.

Calcutta Gazette, 5th September, 1816

(The "Gazette's" good wishes were not apparently realised for this project was never put into execution—at any rate in the ambitious form in which the "Gentleman who belonged to Bombay"⁹ devised it)

Nearly half a year has elapsed since the date **of** our last advices **from** England, every successive day brings a blank report **from** Kedgerree.

Calcutta Gazette, 22nd March, 1821

(English news eventually appeared on May 24th.)

*

Mails

1825.—The Madras mail to Calcutta, by land, was done in 10 days 17½ hours.

1826.—From Bombay to Calcutta, an express mail was done in 11½ days.

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The news of the death of the Princess Charlotte, which took place on November 6th, 1817, was only known in Bombay on February 28th, 1818, and the death of George III, which took place on January 29th, 1820, was not announced there until May 23rd. On March 1st, 1823, there had been no arrivals from Europe for a month. An editor in 1824 thus consoles himself on January 24th of that year: "We have been obligingly favoured with the loan of papers for July and the beginning of August, 1823." When in this year it was asserted that steam would bring letters in one-fourth of the time then taken, the statenient was looked upon as an idle dream. On January 10th, 1827, the latest London dates were June 8th, 1826.

JAMES DOUGLAS

B—The Voyage

Thus gloomy was the general aspect of affairs on the western side of India. . . . In this dilemma, such as could accomplish it, resolved to settle their Indian concerns and to embark for England by the first convenient opportunity. But in addition to other inconveniences, we were informed . . . that the captains of the homeward-bound Indiamen demanded eight thousand rupees (1000 /.) for the passage of a single person, and fifteen thousand for that of a gentleman and his wife. . . . The captain with whom we embarked for England received upwards **of** eighty thousand rupees, or ten thousand pounds sterling, **for**

his homeward-bound passengers. One gentleman, distinguished for his liberality, gave five thousand guineas for the accommodation of his wife and family in this ship, besides an ample supply of Madeira wine, provisions, and delicacies for the table. This will be deemed a handsome compensation for five or six months board and lodging in any part of the world.

FORBES (1783)

*

St Helena, 24th September, 1782

My dear Sister,

A more uncomfortable passage than I have made to this place can hardly be imagined. The port of my cabin being kept almost constantly shut, and the door opening into the steerage; I had neither light nor air but from a scuttle: thereby half the space was occupied by a great gun, which prevented me from going near the port when it was open.

Mrs Tottingham at first took her meals in the Cuddy, but the gentlemen were in general too fond of the bottle to pay us the least attention; after tea, we were never asked to cut in at cards, though they played every evening. Captain Lewis swore so dreadfully, making use of such vulgar oaths and expressions; and became so very rude and boisterous, that Mrs Tottingham withdrew intirely from table, and never left her cabin for the last thirteen weeks: but the Colonel took care to send her whatever was necessary; I had no one to perform the like kind offices for me, and was therefore forced to venture up among them, or risk starvation below.

MRS FAY

*

It was below deck that impressions were less favourable. Cabins were represented by canvas partitions. If there was a storm these partitions offered no obstacle to the furniture which rolled from one end of the ship to the other. Not only furniture; for when Mirza Abutakt, a cultivated Muhammadan gentleman, was travelling—"Mr Grand, who was of enormous size, and whose cabin was separated from mine only by a canvas par-

tition, fell with all his weight upon my breast and hurt me exceedingly. What rendered this circumstance more provoking was that if, by any accident, the smallest noise was made in my apartment, he would call out, with all the overbearing insolence which characterises the vulgar part of the English in their conduct to Orientals, 'What **are you** about? You don't let me get a wink of sleep' and other such rude expressions.

KINCAID

*

Passages by the Cape route were much cheaper now (i.e. after the opening of the overland route through Egypt in 1830); a single passage cost about L.120 or for a reserved cabin L.150. The cabins were not furnished and passengers **were informed that** "cabin-furniture and fittings-up shall be procured of the Upholsterers at the East India Docks." Such fitting-ups included "a sofa with mattress, a pillow and a chintz covering for the day-time, a Hanging Lamp, a looking-glass with sliding cover; a swing-tray; a chest of drawers in two pieces; foul-clothes Bag; an oil-cloth or carpet (This merely for the sake of Appearances)". A travellers' Handbook of 1844 gives an interesting list of articles which a gentleman would need on the voyage to India. Among these were

"six pairs of loose cotton drawers, for sleeping or bathing in. A couple of brown Holland blouses. A blue camlet jacket. Two pairs of merino camlet or gambroon trousers. Two dozen pairs of white jean trowsers. Two dozen white jean jackets. Two dozen white jean waistcoats. A hat, in leathern box. A straw hat. A blue cloth forage-cap. Two black silk stocks or cravats. A dozen pairs of white kid gloves. A couple of morning gowns. A boat-cloak of camlet. A bucket and rope (serviceable in drawing up salt water whenever required.)"

KINCAID

*

The arrival of the first steamer which had ever visited **Bombay** was expected with the greatest anxiety: two guns were to **be fired from** the ramparts on her heaving in sight, **that the public might have timely notice; and at twelve o'clock the signal**

announced the appearance of the long looked-for *Ganges*, Towards sunset on the 21st of October (1827)... we approached the harbour. . . . The whole population, European and native, were in motion. The scene was truly exhilarating; the exquisite natural beauties of the harbour, the delightful serenity of the weather, the variety of vessels, the thousands of natives crowded on the shore, while the sea was covered with boats, some full of European officers in their scarlet uniforms, some laden with Parsees in their singular costume . . . gave an indescribable life and brilliancy to the scene.

MRS LUSHINGTON (1827)

*

There have been two or three such dreadful shipwrecks; two at Bombay the same day, one the 'Lord W. Bentick/ with troops from England; most of the passengers, all the ladies and children, and eighty recruits drowned within sight of the crowds on shore; boats and steamers trying to get to them all through one day, but the gale was too violent, and the ship went to pieces at night. Six hours after another ship was lost at the same place. The details are so shocking in the papers to-day.

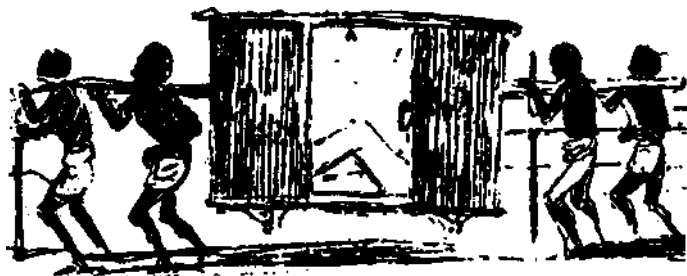
MISS EDEN (1840)

C—Road Transport

Posting by palkee was an organisation of the East India Company, and was entirely under the control of the Postal Department or the District Collectors, and early in "the forties," or, to be particular, say in 1845, if you intended proceeding from Bombay to Calcutta by this mode of conveyance you had to put yourself in communication with the head of the Postal Department at least ten days before the date of your intended departure, giving him your destination, with many other particulars (which we will endeavour to relate), such as the exact day and hour of your intended departure from Bombay. You elect, we will suppose, the route by Poona, Hyderabad, Vizagapatan, Masulipatan, and Cuttack. Very well. As there are close upon a hundred halting stations, you will require to state how long you intend halting at each of them, and the names of the stations you



intend to halt at, stating whether for sleep or refreshment. You are a "stout*" party, this word meaning in those days not corpulent but robust, and intend to do the journey in twenty-two days. You know what palkee travelling is. You have gone to Love Grove, Worlee, we will suppose, five miles, and have emerged as stiff as a poker. Bear in mind your intended journey is one of 500 hours' duration. If it is in April or May you will journey mostly by night and rest during the day. The reason why the Postmaster requires all these particulars is that the laying down a dak to Calcutta involves an immense correspondence, and the route covers nearly 1,400 miles You will require changes of linen and clothing, so you are allowed two banghy bardars, who will swing on their shoulders your kit, not more than fifty-six pounds. Brandy goes into narrow compass—you must depend upon beer where you can find it, and



you will require to pay through the nose for it in these distant regions, owing to the expense of carriage.

If your period is the rains, be thankful if you escape malaria, or if in the hot weather, sunstroke. It may be your last journey, and the palanquin may become your catafalque; certainly, even in our day the dead body of a traveller has been taken out of a palkee. I have not alluded to the crossing of rivers or the dangers of being drowned in a box, or surprised by a tiger. Your bearers drop their burden like lightning, and make tracks for the nearest tree, or bumping against some rock in the dark you are shot out of your tabernacle like a catapult, your Venetian along with you; happily for you if you fall among the yielding branches of some bush, scrub or tree; or you are attacked by dacoits who hunt in gangs, plundered and left dead or wounded in the jungle, or,

maybe, confronted by a swollen river. A man has just told us that his bearers once deserted him, and that he had to haul his palkee for four days on a country cart. These are the contingencies you must face.

JAMES DOUGLAS

*

Palanquin travelling pleases me very much: I can sleep a good part of the night, and, being able to sit up or lie down at pleasure, with plenty of room, I find it far less fatiguing than being cramped up all day in a carriage.

Letters from Madras (1838)

*

All was darkness when we reached the place from whence we were to ascend the ghaut: we heard the loud voices of the bearers and villagers! but in a minute a hundred torches were lighted, and what a curious and novel scene we then saw around us! Including our servants, and bearers for eight palanquins, there were more than a hundred persons. The servants were scolding and giving orders; the bearers wrangling with each other; then there were numbers of women holding copper dishes, in which were small lights, and who were calling out for 'pice*. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the heat from the numerous torches was overpowering. I was very glad to creep into my palanquin, with my poor little frightened dog, and to shut the doors.

All being ready, we began the ascent of the ghaut, and the bearers began to chatter, groan, and grunt. As I preceded the rest of the palanquins, I could, by looking back, see them winding up the steep mountain paths at every turn of the road, while the torches lit up the rocks and trees, and occasionally, for one minute, some deep and dark ravine; when I lost the lights, the stars became visible through the dense foliage. ... This way of travelling is at all times fatiguing. As it is not easy to prevent the bearers from talking incessantly, it is almost impossible to sleep; should you fall asleep, you are apt to incline too much to one side in the palanquin, and are sure to be immediately aroused by the bearers, as it is difficult to keep it steady under

these circumstances. Thus this mode of conveyance is **not** pleasant at night; in the day it is not so disagreeable.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

For the conveyance of your person, India supplies you with these several contrivances. You may, if an invalid, or if you wish to be expeditious, engage a palanquin, station bearers on the road, and travel either with or without halts, at the rate of three or four miles an hour; we cannot promise you much pleasure in the enjoyment of this celebrated Oriental luxury. Between your head and the glowing sun, there is scarcely half an inch of plank, covered with a thin mat, which ought to be, but never is, watered. After a day or two you will hesitate which to hate most, your bearers' monotonous, melancholy grunting, groaning chaunt, when fresh, or their jolting, jerking, shambling, staggering gait, when tired. In a perpetual state of low fever you cannot eat, drink, or sleep; your mouth burns, your head throbs, your back aches, and your temper borders upon the ferocious. At night, when sinking into a temporary oblivion of your ills, the wretches are sure to awaken you for the purpose of begging a few pice, to swear that they dare not proceed because there is no oil for the torch, or to let you and your vehicle fall heavily upon the ground, because the foremost bearer very nearly trod upon a snake. Of course you scramble as well as you can out of your cage, and administer discipline to the offenders. And what is the result? They all run away and leave you to pass the night.

All we have said of the palanquin is applicable to its humble modification. The mancheel in this part of the world consists merely of a pole, a canvas sheet hung like a hammock beneath it, and above it a square moveable curtain, which you may draw down on the sunny or the windy side. . . . As it requires a little practice to balance oneself in these machines, you will infallibly be precipitated to the ground when you venture upon your maiden attempt. After that a sense of security, acquired by dint of many falls, leaves your mind free to exercise its powers **of** observation, you will remark how admirably you are situated **for** combining the enjoyments of ophthalmic glare, febrile reflected heat, a wind like a Sirocco, and dews chilling as the hand of **the** Destroyer. . . .

If in good health, your best plan of all is to mount one of your horses, and to canter him from stage to stage, that is to say, between twelve and fifteen miles a day. In the core of the nineteenth century you may think this style of locomotion resembles a trifle too closely that of the ninth, but, trust to our experience, you have no better.

BURTON (1847)

*

About 1850, a line of what were called 'Transit Coaches' was established between Bangalore and Ootacamund. . . . The carriages were what were known as 'nibs' and were two wheeled and waterproof with Venetians and glass windows. They were drawn by bullocks which were changed every five miles. . . . If not pressed for time this was a pleasant way of travelling, with a chance of some shooting *en route*. A servant could be carried on the covered seat by the driver, and there was room for a port-manteau, gun-case etc in the well of the conveyance. . . . From Bangalore to Madras and *vice versa*, horse transits were used, the journey being done in four days.

The rates for meals on the line from Bangalore to Ootacamund (which were excellent) were ridiculously cheap. The bullocks used were of the Mysore breed and very fine. They could trot from four to five miles an hour easily.

SIR J. F. PRICE

(From information supplied by Mr W. E. Schmidt.)

*

The usual mode of conveyance from hill stations in India is so fast being superseded by motor power that I would hope to immortalize the good old way by describing it in my pages. Imagine a little springless cart, with deep set floor, to reach which a high step was involved, or by tipping the barrier a head-first entrance could be effected. This appertained to the front seat only. For the back, a flying leap was required, a one, two, three-and-away stimulant, or much hoisting on the part of assistants. This Royal Mail or Government conveyance—and it was no respecter of persons, the same for the highest or the

lowest—had for covering an arched canvas roof, or hood; I say roof advisedly, because it was always there unless removed by the caprice of accident. Two straight bamboo shafts attached lengthwise outside the body of this cart confined one pony, or tried to do so; a second pony ran attached alongside, outside the left shaft. A problem I never succeeded in solving was which did the work, or which did most, or least, or was it fairly divided?

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

There are lucky people in this world who do not even know what a bandy is. I discovered it to be a springless bullock cart, in which I suffered a great quantity of all sorts of sufferings, many of which left their mark.

The cart has a long floor, so to speak, on which a mattress is stretched, two enormous, clumsily-built wheels, a cover of woven rush-like material, and the whole caboodle, drawn by a pair of tiny bullocks, gets over the ground at the rate—if luck is with you—of about two miles an hour. This rate is, however, by no means uniform; the bullocks may be, and generally are, inferior; the roads eighteen inches deep in mud; the driver may lose his way in the pitchy darkness; and if by any chance sleep overtakes the passenger, he will probably wake some hours later to find a cocoanut-oily head reposing peacefully upside-down upon his pillow, and the whole cavalcade at a dead stop. My luckless husband, who, unable to dissemble his slumbers, duly informs the driver of the fact that he has temporarily closed his vigilant eye, once woke to find himself alone, and wrong end up! The driver had disappeared, taking his bullocks with him, and the unyoking of them had lowered the cart to the ground.

J. M. GRAHAM (1914)

D—The Iron Horse

Shortly before we left India, the railroad at Bombay was completed to a short distance beyond Tannah.

This was the first railroad opened in India. It can well be imagined what astonishment and excitement it caused among the natives, as **well** as what surprise it occasioned to many Europeans;

for there were Anglo-Indians at Bombay, who had not been in Europe for many years, and who, therefore, had not seen a railroad.

A very handsome new temple had been commenced before the railroad was contemplated, and was on the verge of completion when the latter was opened. A railway station, and a Hindoo temple in juxtaposition—the work of the rulers and the ruled. Could one possibly imagine buildings more opposite in their purposes, or more indicative of the character of the races? the last triumphs of science side by side with the superstitions of thousands of years ago.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

The railway (from Cawnpore to Allahabad) is as yet (1858) in a very incomplete state. One of the most disagreeable incidents of travelling by it is the liability to be set on fire by sparks from the engine; wood being used instead of coal. The other day, as a detachment of Sikh soldiers were going up country, one of them had his clothes set on fire by the embers. All his comrades were dressed in cotton-quilted tunics, with their pouches full of ammunition; and in their alarm they adopted the notable device of pitching the man out of the window in order to get rid of the danger to which they were exposed.

RUSSELL (1858)

(According to Majendie, this was quite a frequent happening—or at least the firing of clothes and baggage was. Russell does not tell us what happened to the defenestrated incendiary.)

*

Railway travelling in India is easy and most comfortable. First-class fares correspond with third-class fares in England, and one never thinks of travelling in any other carriage than first-class. These carriages, large and roomy, are most comfortable for night travel. Attached to each compartment and opening from it is a lesser one for servants, et cetera, since to have them at hand for the exigencies of travel is as essential as the juxtaposition of one's hand luggage. I have often thought

that the superiority of attention on Indian lines is due to the fact that so many English gentlemen are engaged thereon. Men whose nerves, perhaps, overcame them at the crucial point of an examination; and who failed for this reason only to meet the appointed test. I never met with anything but the most polite **and** helpful attention, even more than I had right to expect. Perhaps, the bold Miss Sahib, travelling alone, excited their chivalry and special consideration.

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

The waiting-room was like nothing I had ever seen before. A large, dirty, barn-like apartment with some cane seats arranged round the wall, and an attempt at a dressing-table, with a spotty looking-glass on it, in one corner. One small lamp, smelling vilely, served to make darkness visible, and an old hag crouching at the door was the attendant spirit. It doesn't sound cheery, does it? The bearer, Autolycus by name (I call him Autolycus not because he is a knave and witty, but because he is such a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles), made up a bed on one of the cane seats, and there, in that dreary and far from clean apartment, with horrible insects walking up the walls and doubtless carpeting the floor, with no lock on the door and unknown horrors without, I slept dreamlessly. My last waking thought was, "I wish my mother could see me now!"

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

IX—PESTS

In dealing with a subject which has—not unnaturally—greatly occupied our contributors, one is obliged to posit the question, "What, in India, constitutes a Pest?" Fryer included among them the banyans or native clerks at Surat; another writer has plumped for the vakil or lawyer; a third would not omit the chit—the brief personal note of enquiry, invitation, supplication or what not. Are man-eating tigers a Pest—or something worse? Are Indian servants a Pest? (Probably; but I have given them a section to themselves.) With some play upon its title, the scope of this section might have been indefinitely widened. However, there is no doubt about such creatures as mosquitoes, fleas, bugs, rats and snakes; so here they are.

The prodigious growth of Vermin and of venomous Creatures, at the time of the *Mussouns*, do abundantly like-wise demonstrate the malignant Corruption of the Air, and the natural Cause of its direful Effects upon the *Europeans*. For Spiders here increase their Bulk to the largeness of a Man's Thumb, and Toads are not of a much less size than a small Duck; Whereby 'tis easily seen by these venomous Creatures, what encouragement these infectious and pestilential Qualities meet with in this place, and under what a contagious Influence all the Inhabitants must consequently be seated. This indue'd a Gentleman one time in the Governours and my Company, and some other Persons of Note, to affirm, that he believ'd it rain'd Frogs; because he espied upon his Hat small Frogs, about the bigness of the end of one's Finger, when he was at a great distance from any House or Covering, from whence they might drop.

OVINGTON (1690)

*

It is at dinner, however, that the insects are most tormenting. Attracted by the lights, they fly into the room in countless numbers. There is every variety. The long, graceful green mantis

alights on the table, and begins stretching out its arms as in an imploring attitude. There are myriads of moths, with wings which seem made of delicate gold and silver tissue; some look inlaid with mother-of-pearl. There is a long, dark yellow hornet-shaped insect, with no end of joints, which makes you shudder as it flies by; blister flies, with either ruby or emerald-coloured bodies; large beetles 'armed to the teeth' in black, strong, shining armour, and with horns like formidable spears. These beetles are so strong that, when placed under a wine-glass, they move it before them as they advance along the table.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

I was by a cruel oversight put into a bed without the usual appendage—a set of gauze curtains. The door of my apartment, which was on the ground floor, opened on the garden, and a well, a pool, and a dense mass of foliage formed a splendid mosquito-preserve, within a few yards of it. A couple of oil-lights, in wall-shades, burnt in the room; the doors were open, the night close and oppressive. . . . "Quack! quack! quack!" said the *mezzo-soprano* voices of the little frogs—"croak! croak! croak!" responded in deep bass the huge Lablaches of the pool—"click! click!" went the lizards—"ghur! ghur!" the musk-rat as he ricketed round the room, emitting his offensive odour. . . . What a prize for the mosquitoes was I—a fine fresh ruddy griffin, full of wholesome blood, the result of sea-breezes and healthy chylication! and, in good sooth, they did fall foul of me with the appetite of gluttons____In vain I scratched—in vain I tossed—in vain I rolled myself up like a corpse in a winding-sheet. Nought would do; so out I jumped, half phrenzied, and dipping my hand in the oil-glasses of the lamps, I rubbed their unctuous contents over my body, to deaden the intolerable itching—an effect which in some degree it produced.

BELLEW (1843)

April 10th (1823). The Bungalow (the Stewarts' bungalow on the Bombay Esplanade) was hot. Musk rats running about our room perfumed the air very disagreeably, and a troop of ants lodged themselves in our bed. Nothing is ever shut in this country, so that one seems to dress to amuse others.



.... This Season we experimented; which though moderately warm, yet our Bodies broke out into small fiery Pimples (a sign of a prevailing *Crisis*) augmented by *Muskeetoe*-Bites, and *Chinees* raising Blisters on us.

To arm themselves against this Plague, those that lived here have fine Calicut-Lawn thrown over their Beds, which though white as Snow when put on, shall be in an hour besmear'd all over, which might be tolerable, did not their daring Buzzes continually alarm, and sometimes more sensibly provoke, though cloath'd with long Breeches to their Toes, and Mufflers on their Hands and Face, and a Servant to keep them from them with a Fan, without which there is no sleeping.

The rain having ceased, great numbers of blister-flies flew into the ball-room, and a scene followed I never can forget. These insects often alight upon persons without their being aware of it, and should anyone unwittingly crush one on their face or neck, a larger blister instantly rises, and causes considerable pain and inconvenience. On this evening there was a complete swarm of blisterflies. (This was at Dapoorie, near Poona.) Some of these little tormentors climbed up into flounces, hid themselves in folds of net, visited the mysterious recesses of complicated trimmings; some crept up gentlemen's sleeves, others concealed themselves in a jungle of whisker, and there was something very attractive in a bald head, the owner of which, in removing the insect, was sure to blister his hand, or skull, or both. One heard little else all the evening, but, "Allow me, sir, to take off this blister fly that is disappearing into your neck-cloth", or "permit me, ma'am, to remove this one from your arm." This, however, did not stop the dancers, and they polked and waltzed over countless myriads of insects that had been attracted by the white cloth on the floor, which was completely discoloured by their mangled bodies, at the end of the evening.

When I was a child, I had read a little poem, called the 'Butterfly's Ball'; the 'Blisterfly Ball', however, has made even a deeper impression on my mind.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

The first night I slept at this house (Mr Plumer's at Red Hills, Madras) I was awaked by something, as I imagined, running over the bed. . . . Having completely opened the windows, I saw not less than a dozen prodigious Bandecoot rats performing their antics about the room. Upon taking off a silk net I always wore over my hair when in bed, I found several holes gnawed by these animals, attracted by the powder and pomatum, of which, according to the then fashion, I wore a large quantity. Upon mentioning the circumstance at breakfast, I was told I had escaped marvellously in not losing the whole of my hair.

HICKEY (1779)

For the last three weeks (at Mussoorie) we, have had rain night and day; sometimes it has cleared in the evening for two hours; any thing more unpleasant you cannot well imagine; certainly the rains are very disagreeable in the Hills— Another plague.— The house swarms with fleas. At first they did not attack me; for the last few nights I have hardly closed my eyes on account of their sharp fierce bites; they will worry me into a fever. To counterbalance this plague we have no mosquitoes; and the climate is too cold to render a pankha necessary. How often have I remembered a poetical epistle of Mr W. S. Rose's, beginning

"These cursed fleas, they bite and skip so,
In this Island of Calypso !"

MRS PARKES (1838)

*

.... The mate-bearer then presented his petition, "Will the mem sahiba give me a plaister? the rats have gnawed my fingers and toes." It is a fact that the lower part of the house is overrun with enormous rats, they bite the fingers and feet of the men while they are asleep on the ground. The other evening I was with my beautiful and charming friend, Mrs F——, she had put her infant on a mat, where it was quietly sleeping in the room where we were sitting. The evening darkened, a sharp cry from the child startled us—a bandicote rat had bitten one of its little feet!

MRS PARKES (1825)

*

We simmer again and long for sleep; we listen to the sharp buzz of the mosquitoes, which, driven away by the punkah, hold their concert by the ceiling and in the adjoining rooms; we hear the loud croakings of the loquacious frog outside, the shrill and never-ceasing chirrup of the crickets that infest every crevice of the house within; we watch a musk-rat, which we discover it to be from its odour, on its midnight rounds—we let fly one of our slippers at it, but without effect; we feel something cold and

slimy on our forehead, and knocking it off, find it to have been a lizard; and then the stoppage of the punkah necessitates an excursion into the verandah to punch the head of the coolie. . . . And then we try to sleep again. . . . And we simmer again, and, accidentally, sleep does come and alight upon our exhausted frame, just as the big gun booms in the distance, and our ears are saluted with the "Sahib! Sahib!" that announces it is the hour to get up.

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

The plagues of Egypt were not worse than the plagues of India. Last night the dinner-table was covered with white ants, having wings: these ants, at a certain period after a shower, rise from the earth with four large wings. They fly to the lights, and your lamps are put out in a few minutes by swarms of them: they fall into your plate at dinner, and over your book when reading, being most troublesome. . . .

Tonight we are suffering under a more disagreeable infliction; a quantity of winged-bugs flew in just as dinner was put on the table, the bamboo screens having been let down rather too late. They are odious; they fly upon your face and arms, and into your plate; if you brush them away, they emit such terrible effluvia it is sickening, and yet one cannot bear them to crawl over one's body, as one is at this minute doing on my ear, without pushing them off.

MRS PARKES (1830)

*

Once when the Civilian was ill he lay in the verandah of a Traveller's Bungalow upon a camp bed, when suddenly the matting beneath him exploded and burst into white ants which began to loose off swarms of unhealthy-looking offspring with enormous wings. As the Civilian lay quaking in fear, there gathered round a dark bevy of crows, mynas and other objectionable and noisy birds which snapped up these unfortunate aviators right royally. In the midst of this there advanced from the compound two vast armies of black ants which fell upon **the**



white ants with the most determined ferocity. The Civilian's nerve now utterly gave way and he crawled demented from the field and endeavoured to deposit his weary limbs upon the bungalow bed, which instantly collapsed in shapeless ruin and a horde of savage cockroaches rushed tumultuously forth. Thereupon the Civilian wrote rudely in the bungalow book and fled.

The Civilian's South India (1915)

*

There are large snakes here (Samulderi), seven feet long, and as thick as my arm! But worse than snakes, scorpions, centipedes, or even land-wind, are the GREEN BUGS. Fancy large, flying bugs 1 they do not bite, but they scent all the air for yards around. When there is no wind at night they fly round and get into one's clothes and hair—horrible! there is nothing I dislike so much in India as those green bugs. The first time I was aware of their disgusting existence, one flew down my shoulders, and I, feeling myself tickled, and not knowing the danger, unwittingly crushed it. I shall never forget the stench as long as I live! The ayah undressed me as quickly as she could, almost without my knowing what she was doing, for I was nearly in a fit. You have no notion of anything so horrible! I call the land-wind, and the green bugs, the "Oriental luxuries." . . .

The black bugs are not so horrible as the green ones, but bad enough, and in immense swarms. One very calm night the house was so full of them, that the dinner-table was literally covered with them. We were obliged to have all the servants fanning us with separate fans besides the punkah, and one man to walk round the table with a spoon and a napkin to take them off our shoulders. Except Mr. S——, who contrived to be hungry, we gave up all idea of eating our dinner; we could not even stay in the house, but sat all the evening on the steps of the verandah, playing the guitar.

Letters from Madras (1838)

*

Being tired, and lying to repose out of the Noise of the Dancers, on the Bank of the River, under a shady Tree, I was

made at by an unsizable Snake, which I hardly escaped, had it not hissed with an unheard-of Noise before me, which rousing me, made me shift its speedy Course, as it angrily gathered up its Body, and darted its self into the Flags on the River-side: These Creatures are dreadful to the Inhabitants, and when I related my Hazard, they wondred I came off so, there being of them big enough to master the largest Animals: After my Danger was over, I was told she had a Nest in that Place, it being lately turned into a Burial-place.

FRYER (1673)

*

Oh! That night—that night! the tossing and the tumbling, and the rolling to and fro; the single combats that I fought, the general actions with large bodies of the enemy that I engaged in, the scratching, and the tearing, and the groaning—ye gods! what words can tell?



I anointed wound after wound, as I received them, with **Eau** de Cologne, salad-oil, lime-juice, mustard, and a hundred other "infallible cures"; but alas! 'twas of no avail. I groaned,—

I walked about my cabin,—I went up on deck,—I drank gallons of cold water,—I buffeted wildly in the air with bolsters,—I tore myself with my nails,—seizing the most bristly clothes-brush procurable, I groomed myself, after the manner of a steed, I—ah! what did I not do during that awful night?

MAJENDIE (1859)

PART TWO
THE PLAYERS

I—THE DAILY ROUND

One general and recurring question which has consistently agitated Anglo-Indian thought is whether the Memsahib was a butterfly creature inhabiting a sort of cocoon of indolence, or whether she was beset by an unremitting series of cares, chores and drudges far exceeding those of her most over-worked sister at home. Opinions on this, it will be seen, vary. As to the Daily Round itself apart from some readjustment of the hours of office, calling and meals—and a decided lightening of the meals themselves—it has not altered very much from century to century. I have placed the extracts in this section mainly in chronological order, except for "The Civilian's" impassioned outburst which seems to come naturally just after the more glowingly Lotusland versions of the Memsahib's day; and also for a small final group which depicts the passing of that agreeable hour of the evening "after the sun's remove."

I can assert that the character of the English in India is an honour to their country: in private life they are generous, kind, and hospitable; . . . and whether presiding at the helm of the political and commercial department, or spreading the glory of the British arms with courage, moderation, and clemency, the annals of Hindostan will transmit to future ages names dear to fame, and deserving the applause of Europe. As husbands, fathers, masters, they cannot easily be excelled; while friendship, illustrated in its more general sense by unostentatious acts of humanity and benevolence, shines in India with conspicuous lustre; distress never pleads in vain, and the milk of human kindness flows in ample streams. . . . And here, with all the milder virtues belonging to their sex, my amiable countrywomen are entitled to their full share of applause. This is no fulsome panegyric; it is a tribute of truth and affection to those worthy characters with whom I so long associated; and will be confirmed by all who have resided in India. . . .

When I resided in Bombay, (i.e. circ 1765-1783) comfort, hospitality and urbanity characterised the settlement, and early hours prevailed. . . . The morning was then dedicated to

business; every body dined at one o'clock; on breaking up, the company went to their respective houses to enjoy a siesta, and return after a walk or ride in the country, to pass the remainder of the evening and sup where they had dined. . . . The mildness and serenity of the moonlight nights render them peculiarly delightful; there indeed we behold the nocturnal luminary "walking in her brightness" Such a spectacle naturally disposes the mind to solemn musings; and, while enjoying the western breeze on the flat roofs of the oriental houses. . . it is impossible not to meditate with pious awe on the Great Parent of the universe.

FORBES (1783)

*

Most Gentlemen and Ladies in *Bengal* live both splendidly and pleasantly, the Fore-noons being dedicated to Business, and after Dinner to Rest, and in the Evening to recreate themselves in Chaises or *Palankins* in the Fields, or to Gardens, or by Water in their *Budgeroes*, which is a convenient Boat, that goes swiftly with the Force of Oars; and, on the River, sometimes there is the Diversion of Fishing or Fowling, or both; and, before Night, they make friendly Visits to one another, when Pride or Contention do not spoil Society, which too often they do among the Ladies, as Discord and Faction do among the Men.

HAMILTON (*circa* 1706)

*

I am now to fulfil my promise, to give you a particular account **of** the day, as it is commonly spent by an Englishman in Bengal.

About the hour of seven in the morning, his doorkeeper opens the gate, and the viranda is free to his circars, peons, chubdars . . . writers and solicitors. The head-bearer and jemmadar enter the **hall** and his bedroom at eight o'clock. A lady quits his side, **and** is conducted by a private staircase, either to her own apartment or **out** of the yard. The moment the master throws his legs **out of** bed, the whole posse in waiting rush into his room. . . **In about half an hour after undoing and taking off his long drawers,**

a clean shirt, breeches, stockings, and slippers are put upon his body . . . without any greater exertion on his own part, than if he was a statue. The barber enters, shaves him, cuts his nails, and cleans his ears. . . . The superior then walks in state to his breakfasting parlour in his waistcoat; is seated; the consumah makes and pours out his tea, and presents him with a plate of bread or toast. The hair-dresser comes behind and begins his operation, while the houccabadar softly slips the upper end of the snake or tube of the houcca into his hand. While the hair-dresser is doing his duty, the gentleman is eating, sipping and smoaking by turns. By and by his banian (clerk) presents himself with humble salaams. . . . These ceremonies are continued till perhaps ten o'clock; when, attended by his cavalcade, he is conducted to his palanquin, and preceded by eight to ten chubdars, harcarrahs and peons . . . they move off at a quick amble. . . . He . . . pursues his other engagements till two o'clock, when he and his company sit down . . . to a good dinner, each attended by his own servant. And the moment the glasses are introduced, regardless of the company of ladies, the houccabadars enter, each with a houcca, and presents the tube to his master, watching behind and blowing the fire the whole time. As it is expected that they shall return to supper, at four o'clock they begin to withdraw . . . and step into their palanquins; so that . . . the master is left to go to his bed-room when he is instantly undressed to his shirt and his long drawers put on; and he lies down on his bed where he sleeps till about seven or eight o'clock; then the former ceremony is repeated . . . his houccabadar presents the tube to his hand, he is placed at the tea-table and the hair-dresser performs his duty as before. After tea, he puts on a handsome coat, and pays visits of ceremony to the ladies; returns a little before ten o'clock; supper being served at ten. The company keep together till between twelve and one in the morning, preserving great sobriety and decency; and when they depart, our hero is conducted to his bed-room. With no greater exertions than these, do the Company's servants amass the most splendid fortunes.

MACKINTOSH,

Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa (1779)

This is a delightful picture; it must not, however, be presented without the following riposte which it drew within a very short time of its public appearance.

The fifty-fifth letter of this author (Mackintosh above) is a strong but highly caricature likeness of the manners of the Europeans in general who serve in Asia. The pomp and state he reports them to live in comes but to the share of those few, who live long enough to rise, by slow degrees . . . to the highest Offices in the State. The lazy and indelicate custom of being dressed and undressed in the manner he describes, never is practised by any but such as grow very corpulent, and not always by them: it was a sight so rare, that I always used to ridicule and laugh at the very few lazy good-natured fellows whom I saw indulge themselves in it. The very pointed description which he gives and applies generally, made me endeavour to recollect from whom he drew it, and I now remember that he was lodged and boarded gratis, in the most open generous and friendly manner, by a plump good-natured hospitable soul as ever existed, who loves a convivial life. . . . He was introduced to the acquaintance and protection of this facetious tunbelled son of Bacchus . . . and every part of this jolly fellow's house was as open and free to his friends as to himself; and knowing, as I do, the forward impertinence of this abuser of the laws of hospitality, I am convinced that his assurance has carried him into the most private apartments of this child of good nature, which unseasonable intrusion of his sprung the hen bird, and gave him the opportunity to see the gentleman dress or be dressed. . . . In general, the young gentlemen, as soon after their arrival as they can, muster money to buy a horse, ride from a little before daylight until eight o'clock, then breakfast and go directly to the public offices, where they write hard till two or three o'clock at noon, then dine, and if all their daily business is done, they drink tea, visit the ladies, and perhaps dance with them or 'sup with them, or, which is more common, attend them in their visitings, which is always in the evening; after which they go home, and are fast asleep by twelve o'clock.

PRICE,

Observations and Remarks (on Mackintosh's Travels) (1782)

A letter from a lady in Calcutta to her Friend in England.

* * *

. . . And yet, dear Girl! this place has charms
Such as my sprightly bosom warms!
No place, where at a bolder rate,
We females bear our sovereign state.
Beauty ne'er points its arms in vain,
Each glance subdues some melting swain.

* * *

To shew you how I spend my time.
After a sultry restless night,
Tormented with the hum and bite
Of pois'nous insects out of number,
That here infest one's midnight slumber,
I rise fatigued, almost expended,
Yet suddenly when breakfast's ended,
Away we hurry with our fops
To rummage o'er the Europe shops;
And when of Caps and Gauze we hear,
Oh! how we scramble for a share!
Then should some two with keen desire
The self-same lace or fringe admire;
What sharp contention, arch remarks,
Whilst tremb'ling wait our anxious sparks.

* * *

At table, next, you'd see us seated,
In liberal style with plenty treated.
Near me a gentle swain, with leave
To rank himself my humble slave.
Well here I know I'm at my task
Ten thousand things I know you'd ask,
As "what's his age, his size, his face,"
His mind and manners next you'd trace.
His purse, dear Girl; the custom here
First points to that; so en Premier
A Chief, my Strephon was before,
At some strange place that ends with *pore*.

Where dextrously he swelled his store
Of Lacks, and yet is adding more.

Cetera desunt

Calcutta Gazette, 12th August, 1784

*

Calcutta, 19th December (1780) . . . The dinner hour as I mentioned before is two, and it is customary to sit a long while at table. . . . The custom of reposing, if not of sleeping after dinner is so general that the streets of Calcutta are from four to five in the afternoon almost as empty of Europeans as if it were midnight—Next come the evening airings to the Course, every one goes, though sure of being half suffocated with dust. On returning from thence, tea is served, and universally drank here, even during the extreme heats. After tea, either cards or music fill up the space, till ten, when supper is generally announced. Five card loo is the usual game, and they play a rupee a fish limited to ten. This will strike you as being enormously high but it is thought nothing of here. Tr6dille and Whist are much in the fashion. . . .

Formal visits are paid in the evening; they are generally very short, as perhaps each lady has a dozen to make and a party waiting for her at home besides. Gentlemen also call to offer their respects and if asked to put down their hat, it is considered as an invitation to supper. Many a hat have I seen vainly dangling in its owner's hand for half an hour, who at last has been compelled to withdraw without any one's offering to relieve him from the burthen.

MRS FAY

*

We will go through the day of such a lady (In Calcutta Society, 1809). She is called some time before sunrise, and her ayah brings her every article of dress, completely clean, fresh from the dhoby. She is enveloped, over her morning wrapper, in a splendid Cashmere shawl, and she is then carried out to take the

air, either in a carriage or open palanquin. Soon after sunrise she returns, and, having taken some coffee, she goes to bed and, if she can, sleeps soundly for an hour or two. She is roused before the family breakfast-hour, in sufficient time to go through a somewhat elaborate toilet; not that she uses the smallest exertion herself, but goes through every process of bathing, hair-dressing, and so on under the hands of one or two black women.

The lady's toilet being finished, she issues from her apartment into the hall, where a breakfast is set out in the most elegant style, and where many gentlemen soon drop in. The meal is a public



one, and continues some time, during which much polite conversation is carried on; the company then disperses, and she withdraws to some elegant room, where she reads a little, does a little fancy work, receives or writes a few notes, or receives some lady visitor. On occasion she returns a visit in her carriage. She knows a good deal of the gossip of the Europeans, but little of the ways and habits of the natives.

A little renewal or change of dress is made again before tiffin, at which time the table is set out with the same display as at

breakfast; and the vacant seats are again occupied by guests. This is the best meal in the day, and much wine and pale ale is drunk. The party does not often sit after tiffin, and our lady withdraws to her own suite, takes off her outer dress and ornament, and lies down, remaining asleep or perhaps reading till the heat of the day is past, and the sun low. Then follows a still more elaborate process of dressing, with an entire change of every article of wearing apparel, and the lady goes forth to take the air in her carriage, generally on the course, where she meets all the great people of Calcutta, and has the opportunity of smiling on her female friends and receiving the bows and compliments of the gentlemen. On her return she adds a few jewels to her dress, and sits down to dinner with her husband, after which she most often goes out to a ball or assembly, for which a last and still more magnificent toilet must be made.

MRS SHERWOOD (1809)

*

August 18th. I was two evenings ago at a public ball at the Pantheon (in Madras) which contains, besides a ball-room, a very pretty theatre, card-rooms and virandas. During the cold season there are monthly assemblies, with occasional balls all the year, which are very well conducted. The Pantheon . . . is used as a free-masons lodge of modern masons, among whom almost every man in the army and navy who visits Madras enrolls himself. The only other public place in Madras is the Mount Road, leading from Fort-George (*sic*) to St Thomas's Mount. It is smooth as a bowling-green, and planted on each side with banian and yellow tulip trees. About five miles from the fort, on this road, stands a cenotaph to the memory of Lord Cornwallis . . . not remarkable for good taste. . . . It is the fashion for ail the gentlemen and ladies of Madras to repair, in their gayest equipages, to the Mount Road, and after driving furiously along, they loiter round and round the cenotaph for an hour, partly for exercise, and partly for the opportunity of flirting and displaying their fine clothes, after which they go home, to meet again every day in the year. But the greatest lounge at Madras is during the visiting hours, from nine o'clock till eleven, when the young men go from house to house to retail the news, ask commissions to town for the ladies, bring a bauble that has been newly set, or

one which the lady has obliquely hinted, at a shopping-party the day before, she would willingly purchase, but that her husband does not like her to spend so much, and which she thus obtains from some young man, one quarter of whose monthly salary is probably sacrificed to his gallantry. When all the visitors who have any business are gone to their offices, another troop of idlers appears, still more frivolous than the former, and remains till *tiffin*, at two o'clock, when the real dinner is eaten, and wines and strong beer from England are freely drank (*sic*). The ladies then retire, and for the most part undress, and lye down with a novel in their hands, over which they generally sleep. About five o'clock the master of the family returns from his office; the lady dresses herself for the Mount Road; returns, dresses, dines, and goes from table to bed, unless there be a ball, when she dresses again, and dances all night; and this, I assure you, is a fair, very fair, account of the usual life of a Madras lady.

MARIA GRAHAM (1810)

*

20th September, 1839. I have been paying a round of visits to all my Madras acquaintances: they seem just in the same state in which I left them, with nothing in this world to do. You can scarcely imagine such a life of inanity. A thorough Madras lady, in the course of the day, goes about a good deal to shops and auctions; buys a great many things she does not want, without inquiring the price; has plenty of books, but seldom reads—it is too hot, or she has not time—*liking to "have her time her own"*, I suppose, like old Lady Q——; receives a number of morning visitors; takes up a little worsted work; goes to *tiffin* with Mrs. C, unless Miss D. comes to *tiffin* with her; writes some dozen of "*chits*." Every inquiry after an acquaintance must be made in writing, as the sergeants can never understand or deliver a message, and would turn every "*politesse*" into an insult. These incessant *chits* are an immense trouble and interruption; but the ladies seem to like them, and sit at their desks with far more zeal and perseverance than their husbands in their cutcherries. But when it comes to any really interesting occupation, it is pitiable to see the torpor of every faculty—worse than torpor: their minds seem to evaporate under this Indian sun, never to be condensed or concentrated again. The seven-

years' sleep of the Beauty in the fairy-tale was nothing to the seven-years' lethargy of a beauty's residence in Madras, for the fairy lady awoke to her former energies, which I should think they never can.

Letters from Madras (1839)

*

(The *Mem-sahib*) is too indolent to go to the *bazaar* or to the European shops for what she wants . . for her shopping involves the preparation of a carriage, dressing, the attendance of servants, and a large amount of trouble. She need not stir. She will not go to the shop—the shop will come to her. The box-man, once squatted on the floor of the apartment, in the midst of his wares, his wily porters, generally Africans, dismissed to sleep in the verandah, exhibits novelty after novelty in tempting succession—a dress-piece, or a new lace, or a handsome shawl, or a brooch, or a ring. She must be hard indeed to please, if he has not something to please her.

KNIGHTON (1855)

*

Meanwhile your wife has had a merry day. . . . Her curse is the curse of petty repairs; there will be a carpenter who will haggle for an hour and then go away to take his meals, returning insistently when the unhappy woman is trying to lie down. There will be a *darzi*—a tailor—who must be watched like a hawk or he will steal all the material and all the thread he can lay his hands on. If you are foolish there will be a gardener; certainly there will be a syce whose very essence is Lies; or the easy morals of the cook will have given way again. Every one of these, remember, and every other servant in the house and every workman who comes to the house and every single soul with whom the poor lady has to deal, is leagued to cheat and plot and lie and steal and deceive by every method the mind of a Fagin can suggest or a life of petty piracies inspire. . . . That is the memsahib's day. . . . For such women there should be a nightly palace of entertainment provided, with music and pleasant spectacles; instead there is the Club. Half an hour's dutiful conversation in a solemn circle of both sexes; then he who can

bear it no more says, "What about a game of pills?" There is a stampede of males like the bursting of a dam, and your unhappy lady is left to go over the servant worries of the day and the small scandal of the station—and oh, God! how small it is—for a solid hour or so. It will be unlikely that more than two other women in the station know anything even about dress. It is more than probable that everything will be dominated by some coarse and pushing creature . . . whom noone troubles to silence because they all know that this sort of person will come and come and come again when they are wearied out and done; also she will talk to ayahs and so hold many deadly weapons. India is full of such people and they always get into the Club; but you *must* go to the Club though it be peopled by devils incarnate and you fit to drop on your feet. Therefore you cannot always bring there the sweetest of all possible tempers. . . . But as Major Vansuythen said so well, "In a little station we must all be friendly."

The Civilian's South India (1915)

*

"Hear what Indian life is . . . I take my own daily routine for an example. . . . Well, a black rascal makes an oration by my bed every morning about half an hour before daylight. I wake and see him salaaming with a cup of hot coffee in his hand. I sit on the chair and wash the teaspoon till the spoon is hot and the fluid cold, while he introduces me gradually into an ambush of pantaloons and Wellingtons. I am shut up in a red coat, and a glazed lid set upon my head, and thus, carefully packed, exhibit my reluctance to do what I am going to do—to wit, my *duty*—by *riding* a couple of hundred yards to the parade. . . .

This, if there is a parade; if not, I take a gallop with the dogs.

* * * *

Then breakfast, after which the *intellectual* day may be said to dawn; for from this till four or five p.m. your occupation must be among your books, your pen, your pencil, and such-like servants of the brain."

(Sir) Herbert Edwardes in a letter to
Cowley Powles, March, 1841

*

L'Allegro (the gentleman on leave at Ootacamund) dresses at mid-day, he has spent the forenoon either in bed or *en deshabelle*, in dozing, tea-drinking, and smoking, or, if he be of a literary turn of mind, in perusing the pages of "The Devoted", or, "Demented One"... . The ladies are generally at home between twelve and two, but L'Allegro, considering the occupation rather a "slow" one, votes it a "bore". But there is the club, and a couple of hours may be spent profitably enough over the newspapers, or pleasantly enough with the assistance of billiards and whist. At three o'clock our Joyful returns home, or accompanies a party of friends to a hot and substantial meal, termed tiffin, followed by many gigantic Trichinopoly cigars, and glasses of pale ale in proportion.

A walk or a ride round the lake, is now deemed necessary to recruit exhausted Appetite, who is expected to be ready at seven for another hot and substantial meal, called dinner. And now, the labours of the day being happily over, L' Allegro concludes it with prodigious facility by means of cards or billiards, with whiskey and weeds.

BURTON (1847)

*

One of the pleasant duties of an Indian officials life is the winter march into the interior of the country. Taking up house and home under canvas, and marching on from day to day, or



resting in one place for a few days, as the work may require—a district officer is brought face to face with all the people under his government; and, pitching his tents outside a village or town, he opens his court amongst them, and they can flock in and explain their grievances, their difficulties, or their quarrels, and he can judge for himself of the facts of a case that might be greatly misrepresented at a distance.

EDWARDES (1841)

*

After leaving the native town, we drove to the esplanade which is near the fort of Bombay. The band was about to play, and the fashionable world just arriving in carriages or on horse-back, and many European children on ponies, or in small carriages drawn by native servants. It was nearly dark when we reached this 'prado' . . . the only lights were those for the musicians, who were playing from notes, and the lamps of the numerous carriages. The ladies remained in their britzkas, and the gentlemen flitted about from carriage to carriage, paying their *devoirs* to the fair occupants, who were just recovering from the unusual and overpowering heat of the day. The children were led by their attendants round and round the bandstand, which I thought would give the little things a decided taste, or dislike, for music in future years.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

There (at Charing Cross, Ootacamund) go the promenaders—stout pedestrians—keeping step in parties and pairs. Equestrians ride the fashionable animals—a kind of horse cut down to a pony, called the Pegu. . . . And invalids, especially ladies, "eat the air", as the natives say, in palanquins and tonjons. The latter article . . . is a light conveyance, open and airy, exactly resembling the seat of a Bath chair, spitted upon a long pole, which rests on the shoulders of four hammals, or porters. Much barbaric splendour is displayed in the equipments of the "gang". Your first thought, on observing their long scarlet coats, broad yellow bands round the waist, and the green turban, or some other curiously and wonderfully made head-gear, which surmounts their sooty faces, is a sensation of wonder. . . . Much

hardness of heart is occasionally shown by the fair sex to their unhappy negroes.* See those four lean wretches staggering under the joint weights of the vehicle that contains the stout daughter and stouter mama, or the huge ayah who is sent out to



guard those five or six ponderous children, whose constitutional delicacy renders "carriage exercise" absolutely necessary for them.

BURTON (1847)

**(He refers, I am sorry to say, to Indian coolies, not Africans.)*

*

Is this (the evening drive at Calcutta) a limbo in which all races, black and white, are doing penance on the outside of strange quadrupeds and in the interior of impossible vehicles? The ride in Rotten Row, the dreary promenade by the banks of the unsavoury Serpentine, the Bois de Boulogne . . . are haunts of frivolous, reckless, indecorous, loud-laughing Momus and all his nymphs—Euphrosyne, and Phryne, and others—compared with this deadly promenade *à cheval et d pied*, where you expect

every moment to hear the Dead March in Saul, or to see the waving black ostrich plumes sprout out of a carriage top; not that there is not frivolity, recklessness, indecorum, and laughter here, too, but Momus wears a white hat and has lunched at the club; Euphrosyne's husband is weary, and she is obliged to be



quiet, as the Melpomenes are in town; and Phryne is going to be married to old Rhadamanthus next week, after the heavy case is disposed of. These are, indeed, solemn processions, which not even youth and beauty, or their simulants, can make gay.

RUSSELL (1857)

*

I think I now behold the group we formed (on the banks of the Hugly)—the white dresses of the ladies, making them to look like spirits walking in a garden, and honest Augustus, with his *solah topee*, looking down on his shoes, and saying agreeable things: the shadows of evening closing around us; the huge fox bats sailing heavily overhead; the river spreading its broad surface before us; the boats moving across it afar, their oars dabbling as it were in quicksilver; the mists rising slowly from neighbouring groves, and then the stilly tranquil hour, broken only by the plash of passing oars, the sound of a distant gong, or the far-off music of a marriage ceremony, or the hum and drumming of the bazaar—those drowsy sounds of an Indian eve. It was a bit of still life to be ever remembered.

BELLEW (1843)

II—SOCIETY

Somewhat naturally perhaps this section turns again largely on the activities of the Memsahib. The Memsahib has been accused of many things besides antagonising the "natives", henpecking her husband and "running the District"; but perhaps the charges arising from the absurdities of Precedence do lie more truthfully at her door than most others. Would it be blasphemous to suggest that she has also been responsible for some relaxation of the standards of intelligent conversation?

In this Country where there is so little heart, sociability, and I may almost say amiability, I cannot describe what their loss (Lady W's friends the Stewarts) will be. The Society here is very formal, and the Ladies very self-sufficient and consequential, thinking of little but their fine Pearls and *local* rank. . . . From my being the first lady, Edward the 2nd gentleman, we are terribly observed, and of course I doubt not pulled to pieces, but thank God we are still quite English, and domestic, taking our walk together every evening, our tea and our bath afterwards, and I am as active and lively as ever; none of the indolence and finery of an Indian lady.

*Letter from Lady West to Mrs Lane,
written from Bombay, 6th March, 1824*

*

The social distinctions are by no means lost sight of in India; on the contrary, they are perhaps more rigidly observed here than at home, and the smaller the society the broader are the lines of demarcation. Each man depends on his position in the public service, which is the aristocracy. . . . The women depend on the rank of their husbands. Mrs A—the wife of a barrister, making £4000 or £5000 a year, is nobody as compared with the wife of B—who is a deputy commissioner, or with Mrs C—who is the better-half of the station-surgeon. Wealth can do nothing for man or woman in securing them honour or precedence

dency in their march to dinner.... A successful speculator, or a "merchant prince" may force his way into good society in England . . . but in India he must remain for ever outside the sacred barrier, which keeps the non-official world from the high society of the services.

RUSSELL (1857)

*

The ladies of Bombay are more tenacious of their rank than we are in England. . . . I once saw a lady, far from well, after a dinner-party at Government House, and wishing very much to go home; who, on my urging her to do so, hesitated, because another person in company—the wife of a man of higher official rank than her own husband—did not seem disposed to move. I took the opportunity of impressing on the poor sufferer, that the sooner this custom was broken through, the better. However, she did not like to infringe it, and so she sat on.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

16th August, 1836.

Topics of interest we have none indigenous to the soil. There is a great deal of gossip, I believe, but in the first place, I do not know the people sufficiently by name or by sight to attach the right history to the right face, even if I wanted to hear it, and we could not get into any intimacies even if we wished it, for in our *despotic* Government, where the whole patronage of this immense country is in the hands of the Governor-General, the intimacy of any one person here would put the rest of the society into a fume, and it is too hot for any super-induced fuming. . . . It is so very H O T, I do not know how to spell it large enough.

MISS EDEN

*

21st December, 1837. You ask what our visitors say, "if ever they say anything?" That, you know, depends upon taste; there

is anything and anything—"fagots et fagots." However, some of them are very sensible and agreeable; and when I have them alone, they talk very well, and I like their company, but as soon as three or four of them get together they speak about nothing but "employment" and "promotion." Whatever subject may be started, they contrive to twist it, drag it, clip it, and pinch it, till they bring it round to that; and if left to themselves, they sit and conjugate the verb "to collect": "I am a collector—He was a collector—We shall be collectors—You ought to be a collector—They would have been collectors;" so, when it comes to that, while they *conjugate* "to collect," I *decline* listening.

Letters from Madras

*

Upon thus settling in town (Calcutta) it became necessary for her (Mrs Hickey) to go through a disagreeable and foolish ceremony, in those days always practised by new-comers of the fair sex, and which was called "setting up", that is the mistress of the house being stuck up, full dressed, in a chair at the head of the best room (the apartment brilliantly lighted), having a female friend placed on each side, thus to receive the ladies of the settlement, three gentlemen being selected for the purpose of introducing the respective visitors, male and female, for every lady that called was attended by at least two gentlemen. One of the three gentlemen received the hand of the fair visitor at the door, led her up to the stranger, announcing her name, where-upon curtseys were exchanged . . . and the party retired to make way for the quick successor, this moving scene continuing from seven o'clock in the evening until past eleven. The same occurred the two following evenings, to the dreadful annoyance of the poor woman condemned to go through so tiresome and unpleasant a process. . . .

As the society of Calcutta increased in number "setting up" became less frequent, and about the year 1786 ceased altogether, persons from thenceforward selecting their acquaintances according to liking as in Europe.

HICKEY (1783)

*

16th February, 1838. For the last few days we have been occupied with company again. A regiment passed through, and we had to dine all the officers, including a lady; now they are gone. I perceive the officers' ladies are curiously different from the civilians. The civil ladies are generally very quiet, rather languid, speaking in almost a whisper, simply dressed, almost always ladylike and *comme-il-faut*, not pretty, but pleasant and nice-looking, rather dull, and give one very hard work in pumping for conversation. They talk of "the Governor," "the Presidency," the "Overland," and "girls* schools at home," and have always daughters of about thirteen in England for education. The military ladies, on the contrary, are always quite young, pretty, noisy, affected, showily dressed, with a great many ornaments, *tnauvais ton*, chatter incessantly from the moment they enter the house, twist their curls, shake their bustles, and are altogether what you may call "Low Toss." While they are alone with me after dinner, they talk about suckling their babies, the disadvantages of scandal, "the Officers," and "the Regiment;" and when the gentlemen come into the drawing-room, they invariably flirt with them most furiously.

The military and civilians do not generally get on very well together. There is a great deal of very foolish envy and jealousy between them, and they are often downright ill-bred to each other, though in general the civilians behave much the best of the two. One day an officer who was dining here said to me "Now I know very well, Mrs.—, you despise us all from the bottom of your heart; you think no one worth speaking to in reality but the Civil Service. Whatever people may really be, you just class them all as civil and military—civil and military; and you know no other distinction. Is it not so?" I could not resist saying, "No; I sometimes class them as civil and uncivil." He has made no more rude speeches to me since.

Letters from Madras

(The first paragraph of this could have stood, mutatis mutandis in 1938.)

*

Strange as it may seem, it had been customary for some years to have these (the Bombay Governor's) receptions at mid-day.

I thought it somewhat odd such a time should have been selected; however, I obeyed orders, though I made up my mind that it should, if possible, be my first and last morning reception, and that in future I would be "at home" in the evening; for, leaving the heat out of the question, ladies look much better by candle-light and feeling this strongly in my own case, I fancied I might find others to sympathise with me, especially those who were not so young as they had been. ... At twelve the company began to arrive. The ladies were dressed in the newest fashions from Europe, and their toilettes were quite *en regie*. The paleness of their complexions astonished me very much, and gave to many an otherwise pretty face, a washed-out look, like that of a faded miniature on ivory. They sat for a short time and we 'made conversation' as well as we could. The gentlemen remained standing, looking as if they wished they had not come, which I own did not surprise me.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

1st November, 1839. The Europeans here (Bangalore) are chiefly military, and the ladies are different from any I have seen yet. The climate does not tempt them to the dawdling class of idleness, so they ride about in habits made according to the uniform of their husbands' regiments, and do various spirited things of that kind. Then there is another set—a sort of good-natured, house-keeperlike bodies, who talk only of ayahs and amahs, and bad nights and babies, and the advantages of Hodgson's ale while they are nursing, and that sort of thing; seeming, in short, devoted to "suckling fools and chronicling small beer!" However, there are some of a very superior class—almost always the ladies of the colonels or principal officers in the European regiments. These seem never to become Indianized, and have the power of being exceedingly useful. Some of them keep up schools for the English soldiers' children, girls especially—superintend them, watch over the soldiers' wives, try to keep and encourage them in good ways, and are quite a blessing to their poor country-women.

Letters from Madras

*

Among the ladies (at Ootacamund) we have elderlies who enjoy tea and delight in scandal; grass widows . . . and spinsters of every kind, from the little girl in bib and tucker to the full blown Anglo-Indian young lady, who discourses of her papa the Colonel, and disdains to look at anything below the rank of a field-officer. The gentlemen supply us with many an *originate*. There are *ci-devant* young men that pride themselves upon giving ostentatious feeds which youthful gastronomes make a point of eating, misanthropes and hermits who inhabit out-of-the-way abodes, civilians on the shelf, authors, linguists, oriental students, amateur divines who periodically convert their drawing-rooms into chapels of ease rather than go to church, sportsmen, worshippers of Bacchus in numbers, juniors whose glory it is to escort fair dames during evening rides, and seniors who would rather face his Satanic Majesty himself than stand in the dread presence of a "woman". We have clergymen, priests, missionaries, tavern-keepers, school-masters and scholars, with *precieux* and *precieuses ridicules* of all descriptions.

BURTON (1847)

*

You ask how I like the Anglo-Indian women and I don't know quite what to say. It is the old story. When they are nice they are very, very nice, but when they are nasty they are *horrid*. Some of them I simply hate. They give me such nasty little stabs the while they smile and pretend to be pleasant! . . .

A dear little lady I met the other day, talking about her sister Mem-sahibs said airily, "Of course we very soon lose complexions, manners and morals." She could afford to say so, it being so obviously untrue in her case. I think it is just this, that the women who are pure gold grow more charming, but the pinchbeck wears off very soon.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

III—HOSPITALITY

*The rosy enthusiasm of Bellew with which I have opened **this section** does not persist throughout it so warmly as one might have hoped; it is a subject on which the views of habitual guest **and** habitual host will, perhaps naturally, be found to differ. Hospitality in India was of course mainly a pleasure; but it was often a duty; and at times—as the authoress of the "Madras Letters" makes clear—an infliction. In some ways—tinned foods, refrigerators, rapid communications—hospitality became easier with the passage of time, in others—curtailed domestic staffs, mounting expenses—more difficult; but generally speaking, it is an aspect of Indian life which has not altered greatly—save in lavishness and outward shows—throughout the centuries.*

In India, from various causes, perhaps sufficiently obvious, the English heart, naturally generous and kind, has or had full room for expansion; and the "luxury of doing good", in the shape of assembling happy faces around the social board, can be enjoyed, without, as too frequently the case here, the concomitant dread of out-running the constable, or trenching too deeply on the next day's quantum of hashed mutton. . . .

Mr Hearty's house was quite Liberty Hall, in its fullest meaning. Each guest had his bedroom, where he could read, write, or doze; or if he preferred it, he could hunt squirrels, shoot with a rifle, as my friend, the Scotch cadet, and I did; sit with the ladies in the drawing-room and play the flute, or enjoy any other equally intellectual amusement, between meals, at which the whole party, from various quarters, were wont to assemble, rubbing their hands. . . . Mr Hearty's house was full of visitors from all points of the compass.

BELLEW (1843)

*

I do not think there is anything one misses more in the cold western land called "home" than the sociabilities of the East. What an amount of pleasure the Westlander loses! Surely



The Sabib Travels

intercourse with our fellow creatures is a thing to be desired, **and** how much easier is entertaining really in England, where every means to assist it is at hand, than in mofussil stations abroad. I have heard much in England about the idle and frivolous lives with which our ladies are credited in India, but from personal experiences I should like to give an emphatic denial to all such assertions. The wives of officials must entertain, and do so at an expenditure which the entertained often grieve over, as they think of the little ones at home who have need of special care in the absence of the parents abroad.

Who but the Mem Sahib arranges all the details of the numerous dinner parties, "at homes," and balls which must be given in the season! One, two, or maybe three hundred guests have to be arranged for, and the manner in which this is done proves the lady Sahib is no drone in her hive. It is always done on a scale so lavish and thorough that our home folk might with all assurance take their notebooks and retire wiser women. It is seldom there is a restaurant or confectioner round the corner to assist with supplies! All must be concocted under the Mem Sahib's order or maybe personal superintendence, and if she is not directing her own hospitalities, she is quite sure to be assisting her friends. Again, decorations at all entertainments are always on an extensive scale—a work in themselves. A few subalterns and young civilians sometimes can be found to assist, but their energies usually depend on circumstances, which the Mem Sahib does her best to circumvent, and generally with success.

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

Thus much for the attributes of our hostess. What of the duties she will be called upon to fulfil? Who and wheresoever she be, she will never escape the ubiquitous dinner-party. India is the land of dinners, as England is the land of five o'clock teas. From the Colonels' and Commissioners' wives, who conscientiously "dine the station" every cold weather, to the wives of subalterns and junior civilians,—whose cheery, informal little parties of six or eight are by no means to be despised by lovers of good company and simple fare,—all Anglo-India is in a chronic

state of giving and receiving this—the most delightful, or the most excruciating form of hospitality.

And who but the hostess is responsible for the destined adjective? She it is who consigns the nervous *dibutante* to the latest joined "thrice-born" civilian, who will not stir his little finger to set her at her ease. She it is who, in a praiseworthy impulse of economy, buys her champagne from the local Parsee store-dealer,—pink champagne, of a brand sarcastically christened *Bahut Accha* (Very Good) by ungrateful bachelors. She it is, also, who detects the budding love affair and lays her covers accordingly; who, at the expense of a little forethought, converts grass-fed beef and goat-mutton into mysterious delicacies, pleasing to the palate, and soothing to digestions sorely tried by the familiar "Billy fares" (Bill of fare) of the Mess and Club khansamah. Great, indeed, is her power, and mercifully does she, at times, misuse it!

MAUD DIVER (1909)

*

The parties in Bombay are the most dull and uncomfortable meetings one can imagine. Forty or fifty persons assemble at seven o'clock, and stare at one another till dinner is announced, when the ladies are handed to table, according to the strictest rules of precedence, by a gentleman of a rank corresponding to their own. At table there can be no general conversation, but the different couples who have been paired off, and who, on account of their rank, invariably sit together, amuse themselves with remarks on the company, as satirical as their wits will allow; and woe be to the stranger who . . . has the chance of learning more of his own history than in all probability he ever knew before. After dinner the same topics continue to occupy the ladies, with the addition of lace, jewels, intrigues, and the latest fashions; or if there be any newly-arrived young women, the making and breaking matches for them furnish employment for the ladies of the colony till the arrival of the next cargo. Such is the company at an English Bombay feast.* The repast itself is as costly as possible, and in such profusion that no part of the table-cloth remains uncovered. But the dinner is hardly touched, as every person eats a hearty meal called tiffin, at two o'clock, at home. Each guest brings his own servant, sometimes two or three. . . .

It appears singular to a stranger to see behind every white man's chair a dark, long-bearded, turbaned gentleman, who usually stands so close to his master, as to make no trifling addition to the heat of the apartment; indeed, were it not for the *punka* (a large frame of wood covered with cloth) which is suspended over every table, and constantly kept swinging, in order to freshen the air, it would scarcely be possible to sit out the melancholy ceremony of an Indian dinner. . . .

I found our fair companions like the ladies of all the country towns I know, under-bred and over-dressed, and, with the exception of one or two, very ignorant and very grossière. The men are, in general, of what a Hindoo would call of a higher caste than the women; and I find the merchants the most rational companions.

MARIA GRAHAM (1809)

**(But later, at Poona, "our party was such as does not often assemble in India. For once we forgot rupees and bales of cotton, and enjoyed a flow of polished conversation, rational cheerfulness and urbanity")*

*

After dinner all the ladies sit in a complete circle round the room, and the gentlemen stand at the farther end of it. I do not suppose they would have anything to say if they met, but it would look better. Luckily it does not last long.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

We had our first party this evening, and it did very well, I believe. It looked very tiresome to an impartial observer, but as they all seem to know each other, I suppose it has its merits. The society here is quite unlike anything I have ever seen before. The climate accounts for its dulness, as people are too languid to speak; but the way in which whole families plod round and round the great hall, when they are not dining, is very remarkable. The whole of this evening it looked like a regiment marching round, and helping their wives along. In general, people at home like to meet strangers when they go out; but here, all near connections

take it as an affront if they are not asked to dinner the same day. It is all very pleasant, and very superior to anything I have been used to; but it is rather odd.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

We have been to one or two large dinner-parties, rather grand, dull, and silent. The company are generally tired out with the heat and the office-work all day before they assemble at seven o'clock, and the houses are greatly infested by musquitoes, which are in themselves enough to lower one's spirits and stop conversation. People talk a little in a very low voice to those next to them, but one scarcely ever hears any topic of general interest started except steam navigation. . . . After dinner the company all sit round in the middle of the great gallery-like rooms, talk in whispers, and scratch their musquito-bites. Sometimes there is a little music, as languid as everything else. Concerning the company themselves, the ladies are all young and wizen, and the gentlemen are all old and wizen. Somebody says France is the paradise of married women, and England of girls; I am sure India is the paradise of middle-aged gentlemen. While they are young, they are thought nothing of—just supposed to be making or marring their fortunes, as the case may be; but at about forty, when they are "high in the service," rather yellow, and somewhat grey, they begin to be taken notice of, and called "young men." These respectable persons do all the flirtation too in a solemn sort of way, while the young ones sit by, looking on, and listening to the elderly gentlefolks discussing their livers instead of their hearts.

Letters from Madras (1837)

*

I hope we shall soon have a respite from uninvited company, and be able to ask young Ch——, whom we are both longing to see; but our house is a complete hotel for people we do not care to see, and I know not a greater bore than "Indian hospitality," as it is called by travellers. Some time ago there was an order given to build a public bungalow at this place; but the Government changed their minds, and desired that none should

be built at the *stations*, "as the residents can always receive travellers." This is mean enough, but all of a piece with the rest of their proceedings.

Letters from Madras (1838)

(The same contributor tells us of an uninvited guest who after monopolising her husband's horse for several days, calmly dumped a large quantity of luggage in her only spare room to be called for on his—again uninvited—return.)

*

We adjourned to the dining-room, being summoned by a rather dingy-looking butler or khanseman. Six wall-shades with oil-glasses, a long table occupying the centre of the room, and about as many chairs as guests, constituted the sum total of the furniture.

In accordance with the almost universal custom of the military circles in India, camp fashion was the order of the day—that is, each gentleman had his own plates, knives and forks, with a brace of muffineers, containing pepper and salt, flanking the same; these last of every variety of size and shape, of glass, silver, or pewter, with a corresponding variety of patterns in the cutlery and plates, constituted as motley a show as can well be imagined.

The servants, too, were of the Rum-Johnny order—those usually picked up by young officers on account of their speaking the English language, a qualification which is pretty certain to ensure their rejection by old Indians. The dingy attire and roguish looks of these fellows harmonised well with the style of the entertainment.

BELLEW (1843)

(This would have been a not unfair description of a "chummery"—military or civil—the best part of a century later.)

*

Time would fail me to tell of how the feast progresses; indefatigable are the slaves in catering for their master's wants ... and vigorous in their contests for the cool champagne. . . .

Chumuch, the Griff, dissects the turkey, but consigns a pound and a half of stuffing into the lap of the adjoining Mrs Koofter; the flounce of the punkah becomes partly disengaged and, after flapping about remorselessly like an unreefed sail in a gale of wind, succeeds in whisking off the protecting wire-gauze top of the lamp, and launching it on the apex of Miss Goley's head, occasioning the blowing-out of the lamp, and the consequent oleaginous effluvium that proceeds from the expiring wick. . . . Then the punkah has to be stopped to undergo reparation; and frantic and awful is the heat that is engendered thereby.

Then, after an interregnum of considerable duration, the second course is produced, succeeded by a pause "more fearful than before".

The sweets have vanished, and at last the dessert, indicative of a concluding climax; the decanters are circulated, and the fair hostess telegraphs . . . the signal for departure and a move (in the right direction) is made.

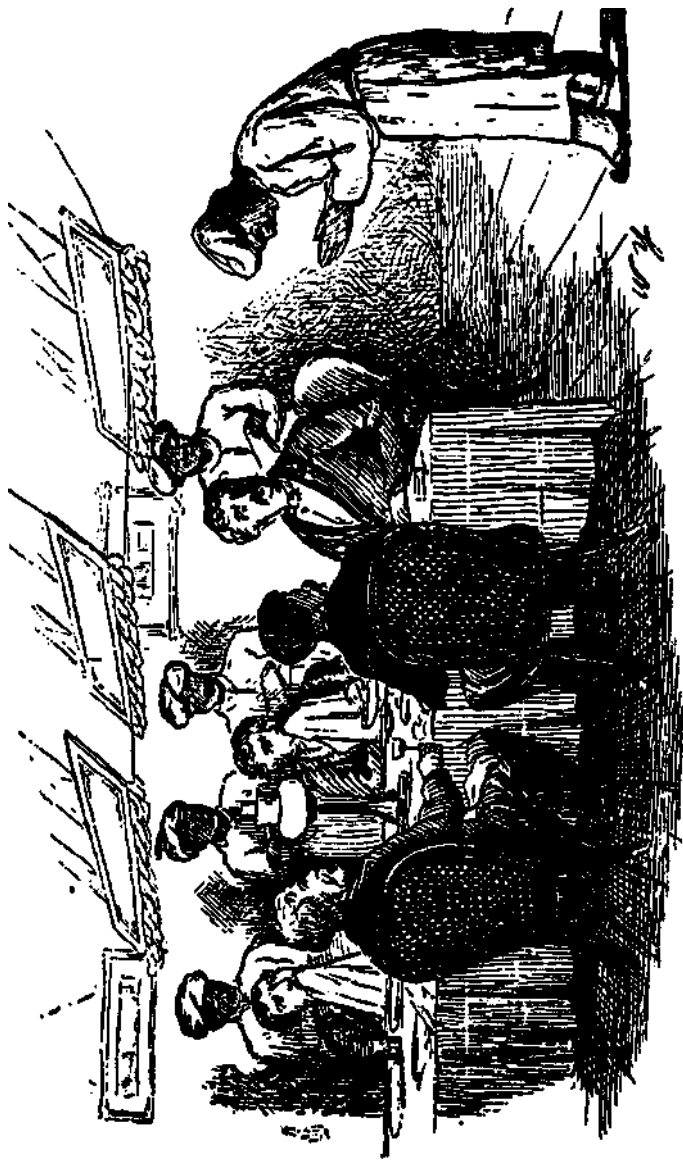
Then the gentlemen are doomed to a further session, which terminates in the production of coffee, when the gong tells its tale of midnight. The piano is heard in the adjoining room: some faint voice warbles a doleful strain, the "Burra Beebee" rises, and a general dispersion ensues.

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

I'm somehow feeling a little bored
With all their district gup;
They're not bad fellows; but, thank the Lord,
The party has broken up!
There's McCaul, the Collector, our biggest gun,
A capital hand at whist,
And passable company, when he's done
Prosing over "the List".

I'm sick to death of his grumbling, though,
For ever about his luck;
And the story I rather think I know
Of every pig he's stuck.



THE POLICE-WALLAH'S LITTLE DINNER

There's Jones, his clever conceited sub,
The "Competition" elect,
A youth into whom I should like to rub
A liniment of respect;

An honest lad, though a bit absurd!
And his diction may be choice,
But I think we should like him more if we heard
Rather less of his voice.

There's Tomkins, our Civil and Sessions Judge,
A pompous ponderous Beak,
Who sneers at McCaul's decisions as fudge,—
We know it's professional pique.

There's little Sharp, the Surgeon, in charge
Of the Central Suddur jail:
He's a habit of taking very large
Portions of Bass's ale;

So after dinner he's hardly fit
To tackle a question deep;
We find it better to let him sit
And sip himself to sleep.

There's the Padre, the Reverend Michael Whine,
The sorrowfullest of men,
Who tells you he's crushed with his children nine,
And what'll he do with ten!

A circle of worthy folk, indeed,
Each of the five, in his sphere;
But it's heavyish work to have 'em to feed
More than twice in the year.

Two of 'em think it a favour quite
To eat my Michaelmas geese,
Let 'em—perhaps they might be right—
I'm only in the Police—

Only a Staff Corps skipper, a drudge,
On a hundred and fifty a week.
Fancy my asking a Sessions Judge!—
Wasn't it awful cheek!

It's nasty, too, my "competitive" friend,
To stand your bumptious air:
We shall both go home, I suppose, in the end,—
You won't be so bumptious there!

The Police-Wallah's Little Dinner
(Lays of Ind., 1886)

IV—SOME MORALS, MODES AND CUSTOMS

This section must perforce be rather a miscellany, a receptacle for a number of interesting sidelights on the Sahibs which will not fit in very neatly anywhere else. Taking Morals first, as in the title, we have already seen how the uncompromising codes laid down by the Governors of the Factories proved too much altogether for some of the weaker spirits. Much was therefore to be expected when the cessation of naval warfare and the less drastic conditions of the voyage brought out, in increasing numbers, the English lady; there was undoubted scope for her refining influence. One immediate effect was the enhanced importance of marriage; in the days of Warren Hastings it was a faux pas to invite "Mr So-and-so and his Wife"—you referred tactfully to Mr So-and-so's "Lady". Hickey was not married to his Charlotte, and indeed the exact legal relationship between Hastings himself and his adored (second) wife the ex-Baroness Imhoff remained open to some question. I have begun this section therefore with a few items bearing on matrimony and sexual morals.

Apology for the Fair

Unstained by Vice, the lonely Eve
Nor clothes nor vesture wore;
'Twas sin first whispered her to weave
Th' accusing Robes she wore.

Hence do our Fair who Virtue love
This Badge of Sin detest,
Their purity they boldly prove
By going quite undrest.

Calcutta Gazette, n t h June, 1818

(The writer of these lines would seem somewhat indebted to a much earlier poem which appeared in Hicky's ill-starred "Bengal Gazette" in January of 1782 and ran thus—

" If Eve in her innocence could not be blamed,
Because going naked she was not ashamed,
Whoe'er views the ladies, as ladies now dress,
That again they grow innocent sure will confess.
And that artfully, too, they retaliate the evil—
By the devil once tempted, *they* now tempt the devil.")

*

" Mr Hicky begs leave to say that he is of opinion that the greatest blessing that his sex enjoys in this savage part of the globe, is the refined and delicate conversation of his fair country-women; cheered and animated by their heavenly smiles, we are made ample amends for the intemperance of the climate; was it not for them we should be unpolished and brutish; to them alone we stand indebted for all those noble refinements of our manners."

A. J. Ricky's *Bengal Gazette* (1780)

(A "*refined and delicate*" piece of hypocrisy on the part of Hicky which did not avert the suppression of his "*Gazette*," which certainly inclined towards the "*unpolished and brutish*" rather than otherwise.)

*

All was grossness and sensuality on the departure of the ladies (after Sunday evening dinner)—the fruit, and the wines, and the enjoyed dishes, or worse, the only pleasing themes of conversation with the voluptuous old Anglo-Indian. (An imaginary character of Knighton's called Ducklet.) I was glad, therefore, when he moved an adjournment to the drawing-room, where we found Mrs Ducklet dozing over a volume of sermons, and the fascinating Julia performing sacred pieces on the piano. It was now half-past ten o'clock, and we had sat down to dinner at half-past seven! such was Ducklet's usual habit, such the ordinary routine of his life—dinner occupied with him exactly one-eighth of his life-time when private and domestic, but a much greater proportion when he entertained friends or went to the entertainments of others.

KNIGHTON (1855)

*

"My dearest Maria,

.. . We will suppose our voyage ended, .. . and that we are all safely landed at Calcutta.

This place has many houses of entertainment and the gaiety that prevails after the arrival of a fleet from England is astonishing. The town is filled with Military and Civil Officers of all classes; and the first thing done after we have recovered our looks, is for the Captains to give an entertainment, to which they issue general invitations; and everybody, with the look and attendance of a gentleman, is at liberty to make his appearance. The speculative ladies who have come out in the different ships, dress themselves with all the splendour they can assume, exhausting upon finery all the little stock of money they have brought out with them from Europe. This is in truth their last stake, and they are all determined to look and dance as divinely as possible. . . .

The gentlemen . . . are as I have said of all ranks but generally of pale and squalid complexions, and suffering under the grievous infliction of liver complaints. . . . Not a few are old and infirm, leaning upon sticks and crutches, and even supported about the apartment by their gorgeously dressed servants. . . . These old decrepit gentlemen address themselves to the youngest and prettiest, and the youngest and prettiest, if properly instructed in their parts, betray no sort of coyness or reluctance. In fact, this is the mode in which matches are generally made; and if now and then one happy couple come together, thousands are married with no hope of comfort and with a prospect merely of splendid misery. . . .

This is called the Captain's "Bali", and most frequently the greater part of the expectant ladies are disposed of there; it is really curious, but most melancholy, to see them ranged round the room, waiting with the utmost anxiety for offers. . . .

If, however, as is sometimes the case, a considerable number remain on hand, after the lapse of three months they unite in giving an entertainment at their own expense, to which all gentlemen are at liberty to go; and if they fail in this forlorn hope, they must give up the attempt and return to England."

Calcutta Gazette, 20th January, 1820

(The above appears in a letter from one "N.S.B." to the Editor of the "Gazette," inspired by the paper's mention of a lottery for brides which had just taken place in Madras: N.S.B. considered that as the demand for "females" had greatly fallen off ("much fewer fortunes made than formerly") this news item was probably true and the Madras brides had lotteried themselves in despair. He cites the above, in support of his case, as from a "young female" writing to a friend at home; the letter may be genuine or ben trovato by "N.S.B.")

*

A young man of Genteel Connexions and Pleasing Appearance, being desirous of providing himself with an Amiable Partner and Agreeable Companion for life, takes this opportunity to solicit the fair hand of a Young and Beautiful Lady. Personal accomplishments are absolutely necessary, though fortune will be no object, as he is on the point of taking a long and solitary journey to a distant and remote part of the country, and is anxiously solicitous to obtain a partner of his pleasures and soother of his woes. A line to Mr Atall, No. 100 Writers' Buildings, will meet with every possible attention, and the greatest secrecy will not only be observed, but Mr Atall will have the pleasure of giving due encouragement to their favor.

Calcutta Gazette, 21st November, 1808

*

"Married at Madras, Mr Richard Newland to Miss Cuthbert, of the same place, with a fortune of 4000 star pagodas and Mr Cuthbert's friendship, who intends giving him the rice contract that Mr Ferguson lately had; the lady is well accomplished."

Hicky's Bengal Gazette (1780)

(The extract is typical of the vulgarity which Hicky and his like considered smart and moderne and which characterised his "Gazette" until its suppression in 1782.)

*

"At Tranquebar, H. Meyer, Esq., aged sixty-four, to Miss Casina Couperas, a very accomplished young lady of sixteen, after a courtship of five years."

Late 18th century notice in Bombay newspaper

*

Another day we met a pinnacle which we found contained Mr Parson, who was returning from Cawnpore with his newly-married wife. He had met this lady at Berhampore; she was the daughter of Colonel Hardwick. She had gone after her father to Cawnpore, and Mr Parson had very imprudently accompanied her. As far as Patna he had had Mrs Hawkins and a missionary's wife in the party, but beyond Patna no married lady had gone with them. This indiscretion had excited so many animadversions that when the parties arrived at Cawnpore Mr Martyn insisted on an immediate marriage, and they were now returning to Berhampore.

MRS SHERWOOD (1810)

("Mr Martyn" was a leading missionary, "a simple-hearted and holy young man.")

*

X, let us say, is an unmarried man and lives mostly in the billiard-room of the Club; he is forty-one; he is bald or so nearly so as to be worse; he has one eye; a large and offensive nose—in fact, a snout—bad teeth and a beard. There comes out from England, to spend a cold season with her married sister, Miss Y, who is twenty; who has nice clothes and dainty ways; who is prettily pleased at being in a new country and is thinking, really, of very little else. You could not, if you tried with *mantrams*, if you strove with prayer and fasting, with simples and with holy water, persuade X that Miss Y has not designs upon his person and his purse—X, that atrocity, that caricature, that bore, that blot! You might reason with him for hours, you might get him to look in a mirror, you might get a great painter to paint his picture and show it him; and still you would leave him unconvinced. He calls Miss Y a "Man-eater" and thinks himself

very smart therefor; he makes offensive bets about her in the billiard-room; he warns and insinuates with hoggish hints and Yahoo jests; he makes a perfect beast of himself. And Miss Y is probably unaware of his existence, or if she has met him at all has shuddered slightly and tried to be kind to him to make up for the terrible unkindness of nature. That is the first Matrimonial Illusion—that all the girls who ever came out from home came out for the sole purpose of attracting some such creature as X, "hooking him", if you please. It is a trifle objectionable. . . .

The Civilian's South India (1915)

*

It seems an open question whether Duelling should be considered as a matter of morals or merely a habit of the age—which certainly took it easily enough. The most celebrated duel in Indian history is probably that between Francis and Hastings; fortunately a meticulous account of this—too meticulous to be included here—is to be found in a letter from Colonel Pearse, who was Hastings' second on the occasion, to a friend in England; it would serve for any well-conducted "meeting" of the period where the principals were novices in the etiquette proper to these functions. (Francis, by the way, was wounded—quite badly though not dangerously; Hastings emerged unscathed; there was no reconciliation—rather the reverse.) Duelling was common till about the time of Waterloo; my extracts from the Fort St George Consultation Book and the matter of fact notices in the Calcutta Gazette could easily be duplicated many times over. I have included under this head what may be regarded as a minor form of duelling, the curious Anglo-Indian habit of bread-pelleting; though Hickey is wrong when he says that Captain Morrison's laudable effort brought this to an end; it went on long after that, for I remember encountering it myself in 1913—though not, I think, since.

"Monday, 1st April, 1697. Mr Cheesely, having in a Punch house upon a quarrel of words drawn his sword (but were parted and put up without any mischief done) and being taxed therewith, he doth both own and justify the drawing of the sword, and alleges that he had received provoking language which he thought himself obliged to resent. Mr Cheesely is thereupon

ordered not to **wear** a sword while **here**, and acquainted **that by the law of this place** whoever gives or receives a challenge is to pay 200 pagodas."

Consultation Book: Fort St George

*

Thursday, May 31st, 1787

Yesterday morning a duel was fought between Mr G——an attorney at law, and Mr A——one of the proprietors of the Library, in which the former was killed on the spot. We understand the quarrel originated about a gambling debt.

Thursday, July 5th, 1787

On Monday last came on the trial of Mr A——for killing Mr G——in a duel. The trial lasted till near five o'clock in the afternoon, when the Jury retired for a short time, and brought in their verdict *not guilty*.

Mr G——was a very respectable man, very able in his profession, and is much regretted by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

Calcutta Gazette

*

In this party (at Messrs Barwell and Pott's in Calcutta) I first saw the barbarous custom of pelleting each other, with little balls made of bread like pills, across the table, which was even practised by the fair sex. Some people could discharge them with such force as to cause considerable pain when struck in the face. Mr Daniel Barwell was such a proficient that he could at the distance of three or four yards snuff a candle, and that several times successively.

This strange trick, fitter for savages than polished society, produced many quarrels, and at last entirely ceased from the following occurrence: A Captain Morrison had repeatedly expressed his abhorrence of pelleting, and said that if any person struck him with one he should consider it intended as an insult **and** resent it accordingly. In a few minutes after he had said so he received a smart blow in the face from one which, **although**



Travelling in the Himalayas. June 1st to 10th 1880.

discharged from a hand below the table, he could trace by the motion of the arm from whence it came, and saw that the pelleter was a very recent acquaintance. He therefore, without the least hesitation, took up a dish that stood before him and contained a leg of mutton, which he discharged with all his strength at the offender, and with such well-directed aim that it took place upon the head, knocking him off his chair and giving him a severe cut on the temple. This produced a duel, in which the unfortunate pelleter was shot through the body, lay upon his bed many months, and never perfectly recovered. This put a complete stop to the absurd practice.

HICKEY (1778)

(For a contemporary reference in Mackrabie's "Journal," see P- 55.)

*

If Duelling is to be regarded as no more than a custom, we may here notice another which produced in its own way almost as much controversy—"Smoaking".

Shortly after Sir Alured (Clarke's) arrival in Bengal his nephew, in compliance with the fashion of those days, thought it requisite to set up a hookah. The first day that the apparatus for smoking made its appearance at Sir Alured's dinner-table, he, Sir Alured, with considerable asperity, looking at his nephew, who sat nearly opposite to him, said, "Pray, sir, give me leave to ask what that may be?" "A hookah," bluntly replied Captain Griffith. "A hookah," echoed the General, "it is a useless if not an offensive thing. I presume, sir, you have adopted it in your capacity of Captain of Dragoons, at least I hope not as my aide-de-camp."

HICKEY (1797)

*

The rage for this sort of smoking (the hooka) was commoner with "country-born ladies," one of whom fascinated Miss Goldborne with her graceful attitude while enjoying her hooka, the long ornamental snake of which was coiled through and

round the rails of her chair. But it extended to some English ladies too; it was considered a high compliment on their part to show a preference for a gentleman by tasting his hooka. It was a point of politeness in such a case for the gentleman, when presenting the snake of the hooka, to substitute a fresh mouthpiece for the one he was using.

Grandpré describes all the hooka bearers coming in together with the dessert, each carrying his master's hooka—and the consequent clamour and smoke which filled the room.

BUSTEED

*

April 10 (1824) Yesterday we had a snug little party at dinner, the Archdeacon, Mr Goodwin . . . and a Mr Page, a man of information, though he annoyed me by smoking a Hooka the whole time.

LADY WEST

*

Caricaturists have delighted in depicting the agonies of the lady being laced into her stays on a sultry Indian afternoon ; the gentleman's toilet—as we have already seen in the case of the young exquisite of Calcutta described by Mackintosh—was equally elaborate, if less excruciating.

Here then (at the house of Mr Thomas Oakes on his first arrival at Madras) I slept, and had the first specimen of the luxurious or effeminate ways of an Indian life, some of the servants who were ordered to attend upon me laying hold of my sleeves to pull off my coat, while others unbuttoned my knees and in spite of all resistance began to pull off my stockings; when others brought a large bright brass vessel and washed my feet, pouring cold water upon them from black porous jars. The room was very lofty. The floor was covered with a fine mat, the walls with a fine shining plaster, without any ornament of pictures or glasses. The furniture was extremely simple, the chairs and sofa having merely cane bottoms, without cushions or covering of any kind, nor were there curtains to the spacious lofty windows, which moreover were not glazed, but consisted of

movable green blinds, opening as folding doors from top to bottom. This simplicity which I observed in all the houses was not with any view to economy, for there was no appearance of *that*, but was suited to the climate, promoting coolness and preventing the accumulation of dust and insects, of mosquitoes particularly, of which I this first evening began to feel the tormenting annoyance, and lizards, of which I saw several running up and down the smooth walls of my chamber with extraordinary swiftness. I watched their motions as my attendants undressed me, but as they did not notice them, or looked at them with unconcern, I concluded they were harmless

My bed partook of the general simplicity and convenience and suitableness to the climate. It consisted of a hard mattress, covered with a sheet, and another folded at the bottom, that I might draw it over me if I pleased. It stood in four small vessels of water, that ants and other insects might not crawl up the posts, and was surrounded by mosquito curtains, or rather by *one* curtain which encircled it all round, for there was no opening at the sides, two men lifting it up at the bottom to let me in, flapping their cloths at the same time to drive away the mosquitoes, and putting it down quickly as soon as I had crept into my cage. As the weather was too hot for me to make use of the upper sheet, I found the convenience of the light drawers, and slept, as indeed was the general custom, in a similar dress ever afterwards.

TWINING (1792)

*

(Colonel) Bunder took it all very easily and quietly, like all old Anglo-Indians. He sat patiently, martyr-like, whilst one servant shaved and another fanned him . . . unencumbered the while with any other dress than a pair of the shortest of drawers. He continued seated whilst the servant put on his stockings, an operation he informed me he had never once performed for himself during the last twenty years, the fan still diligently going without cessation. He then sat quietly for the space of about a quarter of an hour, to regain his strength, after the labour of being washed, being shaved, and having his stockings put on

KNIGHTON (1855)

★

Should the Sahib indulge in Pomp and Circumstance, in personal grandeur and show, or should he not? This was another question, on the borderland between morals and custom, hotly debated until the last British official quitted India. There were many who would have agreed with Sir Arthur Hesilrige's shrewd summing up {which I quote immediately below} and as many who would not. In my time there was a Collector on the Madras List who was said never to go into camp with fewer than twenty-five bullock-carts of effects and comforts; but even his cavalcade was a poor thing compared with those of the earlier generations, as we shall now see.

"Yet vanity is gratified by parade, and even men of superior understanding are too prone to be dazzled by mock pageantry. In England it answers very well with the common people, and points have often been carried by imposing upon the vulgar with pomp and show. In this country it may have a still greater effect, as the lower class of people think less. I am therefore in a certain degree an advocate for state where it can produce a beneficial effect. . . ."

Letter from Sir Arthur Hesilrige to Mrs Hickey, November, 1783

*

The President has a large Commission, and is *Vice-Regis*; he has a Council here also, and a Guard when he walks or rides abroad, accompanied with a Party of Horse, which are constantly kept in the Stables, either for Pleasure or Service. He has his Chaplains, Physician, Chyairgeons, and Domesticks; his Linguist, and Mint-Master: At Meals he has his Trumpets usher in his Courses, and Soft Musick at the Table: If he move out of his Chamber, the Silver Staves wait on him; if down Stairs, the Guard receive him; if he go abroad, the *Bandarines* and *Moors* under two Standards march before him: He goes sometimes in his Coach, drawn by large Milk-White Oxen, sometimes on Horseback, other times in *Palenkeens*, carried by *Coñors*, *Musslemen* Porters: Always having a *Sumbrero* of State carried over him: And those of the *English* inferior to him have a suitable Train.

FRYER (1673)

*

"Thursday, 17th August, 1727. This being the day that the Honourable President and Council had appointed for putting in execution the new Charter, and the Town having received notice accordingly; the Gentlemen appeared on the parade on horse back with the Guards, Peons and country music; and about nine in the morning proceeded to the Company's Garden house in the following manner.

Major John Roach on horseback at the head of a Company of Foot Soldiers, with Kettle drum, Trumpet, and other music.

The Dancing Girls with the Country music.

The Pedda Naik on Horse back at the head of his Peons.

The Marshall with his staff on horse back.

The Court Attorneys on horse back.

The Registrar carrying the old Charter on horse back.

The Serjeants with their Maces on horse back.

The old Mayor on the right hand

and the new on the left.

The Aldermen two and two all on

horse back.

} Six halberdiers.

The Company's Chief Peon on horse back, with his Peons.

The Sheriff with a White Wand on horse back.

The Chief Gentry in the Town on horse back.

"In this manner they proceeded from the parade through Middle gate street into the Black Town, and so out at Armenian bridge gate, through the Pedda Naik pettah to the Company's Garden, where the President and Council were met to receive them."

Consultation Book: Fort St. George



The morning after our arrival Pott proposed taking me in his phaeton to Berhampore, when to my utter astonishment upon descending the grand staircase, which was lined on both sides by servants, all of whom respectfully salaamed him, as he passed, and going into the courtyard, I saw a party of light horse drawn up, dressed in rich uniforms and mounted upon beautiful Arabian horses. The men upon our entering the carriage saluted with their sabres. Upon my enquiring in a low voice of Pott the meaning of this, he laughingly replied they were part of his bodyguard, consisting of sixty, and that he never

moved from home without their attendance. When Pott took hold of the reins two of the troopers immediately preceded us, ten others following us. Thus escorted, away we dashed to Berhampore.

HICKEY (1783)

*

It was before the sun rose that we were to start from Dinapore; we were to meet Mr Ricketts' elephant half way. Our train was little Master Henry* in his bullock-cart, with his nurse; Mr Sherwood and myself in a garden chair (we had only a few miles to go); the palanquin and bearers, unoccupied; the child's crib and his little wardrobe, carried on the heads of porters, called coolies; the washerman, his wife and children, on foot, with their baskets and their irons on their heads; the tailor walking like a gentleman, with no apparent burthen (caleefa is the title generally given to this person), the mate and matranee, each with their short broom in their hands; the kitmutgar and mussaulchee; six or eight bearers, with their sirdar; the bullock-driver, and a sais or two with the horses. Add to these bangy wallahs, or persons carrying baskets of the lady's and gentleman's clothes, and you have a view of our party as we set out to proceed from Dinapore to Bankipore.

MRS SHERWOOD (1805)

(* *The ill-fated "Little Henry" of "Little Henry and his Bearer".*)

*

Our friends (in Calcutta) who are going to Lucnow have hired their boats, an absolute fleet! I must describe the vessels.

1 st. A very fine sixteen-oared pinnace, containing two excellent cabins, fitted up with glazed and Venetian windows, pankhas, and two shower-baths. In this vessel our friend, his lady, and their infant, will be accommodated.

2nd. A dinghee for the cook, and provisions.

3rdly. An immense baggage boat, containing all their furniture.

4thly. A vessel for the washerman, his wife, and the dogs.

5thly. A large boat with horses. 6thly. A ditto. What a

number of boats for one family! . . . They will be three or four months before they reach Lucnow.

MRS PARKES (1823)

*

We marched ten miles to-day. These moves are the most amusing part of the journey; besides the odd native groups, our friends catch up in their *dishabille*—Mrs A. carrying the baby in an open carriage; Mrs C. with hers fast asleep in a tonjaun; Miss H. on the top of an elephant, pacifying the big boy of the A.'s; Captain D. riding on in a suit of dust-coloured canvas, with a coal-heaver's hat, going as hard as he can, to see that the tent is ready for his wife; Mrs B. carrying Mr B.'s pet cat in her palanquin carriage, with her ayah opposite guarding the parroquet from the cat. Then Giles comes bounding by, in fact, run away with, but apologises for passing us when we arrive, by saying he was going on to take care that tea was ready for us. Then we overtake Captain D.'s dogs all walking with red great coats on—our dogs all wear coats in the morning; then Chance's servant stalking along, with a great stick in one hand, a shawl draped over his livery, and Chance's nose peeping from under the shawl.

MISS EDEN (1837)

*

I left Cawnpore for Futtyghur, and the following was the composition of my rather patriarchal turn-out—bating the red coats and muskets of my escort; a naick and six sepoy of the Nizamut, or militia; we might have passed pretty well for the section of a nomade tribe on the move.

A two-bullock hackery or country cart . . . whose wheels, utter strangers to grease, emitted the most excruciating music, conveyed my tent, trunks, and hen-coops, with the dhobie's lady and family perched a-top of all.

Then there was a bangy-burdah, with two green petaras, containing my breakfast and dinner apparatus, whilst Ramdial, my sirdar, trudged on, bearing the bundle containing my change of linen and dragging my milch-goat. . . after him.

Nunco led my dogs in a leash. . . Fyz Buccas, khitmutgar,

trudged along, driving before him a knock-kneed shambling tattoo (pony) laden with his wife, two children and sundry bags, pots, pans, etc. ...

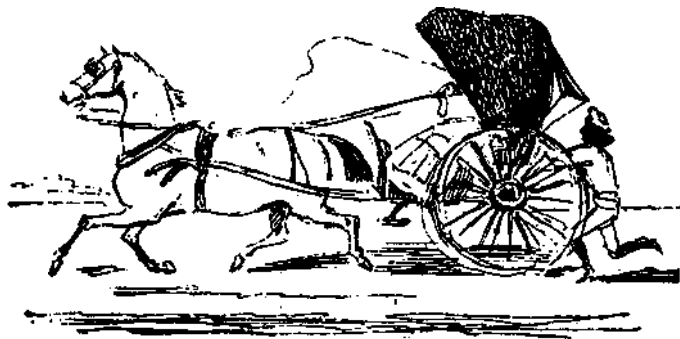
I generally rode ahead of the procession, armed *cap-d-pied*, and shone the very *beau idial* of griffin chivalry. My syce always carried my gun, to be ready for a shot at a passing wolf or jackal, and with one or two other servants, viz. a classee, or tent-pitcher, bhistee, etc., with my guard, we constituted a rather numerous party.

BELLEW (1843)

*

Finally a word on the custom—inexorable and infuriating—of "calling" ; with that useful if illogical object the "Not-at-Home Bokkus" peculiar to India.

I have been employing a shining hour by paying calls. You must know that in India the new arrival does not sit and wait to be called on, she up and calls first. It is quite simple. You call your carriage, the humble, useful *tikka-gharry*, and drive away



to the first house on the list, where you ask the *durwan* at the gate for *bokkus*. If the lady is not receiving he brings out a wooden box with the inscription "Mrs. What's her name Not at home," you drop in your cards and drive on to the next. If

the box is not out then the *durwan*, taking the cards, goes in to ask if his mistress is receiving, and comes back with her salaams, and that means that one has to go in for a few minutes, but it doesn't often happen. The funny part of it is one may have hundreds of people on one's visiting list and not know half of them by sight, because of the convenient system of the not-at-home box.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

V—SPORT

"Pic Nic."

Meets at gunfire this morning on the Byculla Course, where the hounds will throw off a numerous field, and great sport is expected; afterwards Bobbery Hunting, &c, until breakfast, which has been ordered for fifty at the stand at nine; the party will then proceed to Lowji Castle, where various Hindustanee gymnastics, wrestlings, pigeon shooting, juggling and tumbling will be exhibited till four o'clock, when a dinner, in the best English style, will be served up for the same number as at breakfast. The sports of the day to conclude with music, fireworks, &c.

Advertisement in Bombay newspaper, March, 1811

*

The programme quoted immediately above would qualify surely in these present days for the abused adjective "mammoth"; its embarras de richesse indicates all too clearly the width of the field this section must attempt to cover. Let us take it under three heads, however; Sport a la mode du pays; Huntin' (of course); and Shootin.' There was always far more fox-hunting in India than was commonly realised in this country; and if the fox was normally a jackal, the runs were no less exciting. As to shikar, the sportsman of to-day will gnash his teeth over the colossal bags of his forefathers; but he may fall back on a fellow-feeling for Sir Edward West and his Wild Ducks that were no Wild Ducks at all. How often has that happened!

A—Sport a` la mode

"Mr Edwardes presented the Kinge (the Mogul Emperor Jehangir) a mastife, and speakinge of the dog's courage, the Kinge cawsed a younge leoparde to be brought to make tryall, which the dogge soe pinchtt, thatt fewer howres after the leoparde dyed. Synce, the Kinge of Persia, with a presentt, sent heather haulfe a dozen dogges—the Kinge cawsed boares to be brought to

fight with them, puttinge two or three dogges to a boare, yet none of them seased; and rememberinge his owne dogge, sentt for him, who presently fastened on the boare, so disgraced the Persian doggs, wherewith the Kinge was exceedingly pleased."

Letter from Kerridge, President at Surat, 1612

*

A considerable Value is set upon any of our *European Dogs*, either Spaniels, Greyhounds, or Mastiffs. A Water-Spaniel, in the River of *Tappy* after a Duck, will call forth the whole City to the Pastime; and 'tis with them upon this score so very amazing and delightful, because they have none of that Breed among them; nor indeed any other, that I ever saw, but Currs; into which our fiercest and most lively Dogs degenerate, after a Litter or two, by the constant unallay'd heat of the Country. The Grayhounds and Hounds are likewise equally valuable and divertive, and live for some time, if they run them not in the Heat of the Day; but if they chance to hunt with them about Noon, the ambient Air mixing with the natural, when it is fermented and chafed, commonly proves too strong for their Constitutions; so that they frequently expire upon the spot, and rarely live out any number of Years or Months.

OVINGTON (1690)

*

Mr James Gardner invited us to return to his house at Kut-chowra (near Allahabad) that we might enjoy some chita (cheetah) hunting. . . . In the early morning . . . we all rode out eight miles to breakfast in a tent which had been sent out overnight. . . . We arrived at the estate of a native gentleman . . . where, on the plain, we saw a herd of about three hundred antelopes, bounding, running, and playing in the sunshine; and a severe sun it was, enough to give one a brain fever, in spite of the leather hood of the buggy. . . . We got out of the carriage and mounted upon the hackery (cart) on which the cheeta was carried. The cheeta had a hood over his eyes and a rope round his loins, and two natives, his keepers, were with him.

I sat down by accident on the animal's tail:—O-o-owh,

growled the cheeta. I did not wait for another growl but released his tail instantly. The bullock hackery was driven into the midst of the herd. The bandage was removed from the eyes of the cheeta, and the cord from his body; he bounded . . . towards an immense black buck, seized him by the throat, flung him on the ground, and held him there. . . . The herd had passed on; we followed, taking care the wind did not betray our approach. The cheeta was leaning against me in the hackery, and we proceeded very sociably. Another herd of antelopes went bounding near us, the cheeta's eyes were unbound again . . . but the animal turned sulky, and instead of dropping down from the hackery, he put both his fore-paws on my lap and stood there two or three seconds with his face and whiskers touching my cheek. O-o-o-wh, growled the cheeta! my heart beat faster, but I sat perfectly quiet, as you may well imagine. . . . His paws were as light in my lap as those of a cat. . . . Nor was I slightly glad when the cheeta dropped to the ground, where he crouched down sulkily and would not hunt. He was a fine-tempered animal, but they are all uncertain. I did not like his being quite so near when he was unfastened and *sulky*,

MRS PARKES (1835)

*

December 31st 1827—The mornings (at Lucknow) were devoted to sports, and quadrilles passed away the evenings. I saw some very good elephant fights, some indifferent tiger fights, a rhinoceros against three wild buffaloes, in short, battles of every sort; some were very cruel and the poor animals had not fair play.

The best fight was seen after breakfast at the palace. Two quails were placed on the table; a hen bird was put near them; they set to instantly and fought valiantly. One of the quails . . . fell off the table into my lap. I picked him up and placed him upon the table again; he flew at his adversary instantly. They fight, unless separated, till they die. His majesty (the King of Oudh) was delighted with the amusement.

18th January 1831—A great number of elephants fought in pairs during the morning. . . . When the elephant fights were over, two rhinoceros were brought before us, and an amusing

fight took place between them; they fought like pigs. The plain was covered by natives in thousands, on foot or on horseback. When the rhinoceros grew fierce, they charged the crowd, and it was beautiful to see the mass of people flying before them. . . .

A fight was to have taken place between a country horse and two tigers, but Lady William Bentinck broke up the party and retired. I was anxious to see the animal, he is such a vicious beast; the other day he killed two tigers that were turned loose upon him.

Combats also took place between rams. . . .

MRS PARKES

*

There was a fight of wild beasts after breakfast, elephants, rhinoceroses, rams, &c, but we excused ourselves, as there often are accidents at these fights. The gentlemen all went, and so did Giles, and they were quite delighted, and said we ought to have seen it.

MISS EDEN (1837)

(This was at the country house of the King of Oude.)

B—The Hunt

Europe Hounds

To be sold by Public Auction . . . thirty couple of Europe Hounds, and two Terriers.

A character is unnecessary to be given, as they are well known for their goodness. They will be sold in Lots of four couple each. The same day will be sold, if not previously disposed of, a strong, steady Hunter, who is rode in a snaffle, fit for any weight, good bottom, a charming leaper, and has been accustomed to the Hounds.

Calcutta Gazette', 21st August, 1788

*

Sporting Intelligence

The Poonah Hunt and a numerous party of their friends met . . . on the rising ground near the Sangum, where a Jackall of

an extraordinary size was turned down, with good law. He took across country in a northerly direction, and made the River Moota, where he crossed. This part of the chase was very smart going. On crossing the river . . . the dogs were baffled and at check for a long time amongst the dusty roads and some ploughed fields in the neighbourhood of the tope, and, at this critical moment, were crossed about 200 yards in front, by a large herd of deer, but not a single hound swerved, which evinced a rare degree of discipline and staunchness. After some cold hunting across the ploughed ground, where the dogs showed the true stuff, the scent began to improve, and they carried it on again very briskly for about 3 miles. . . . The dogs began to approach his brush, and pushed him so hard that he was compelled to break and make for the hills to the left of the village of Sangum, near which he was run into in grand style, after a run of one hour and five minutes.

The country crossed cannot have been less than 15 miles; and the chase altogether was perhaps a smarter and more interesting one than was ever witnessed in India.

Calcutta Gazette, 1st March, 1810

*

I have just returned from taking a sketch of the circuit bungalow (at Allahabad); it reminds me of very many pleasant mornings, although to an English ear it may not give an idea of pleasure to rise at three A.M., to take coffee by candlelight, or by the light of the mist in the verandah!—The buggy waiting, the lamps lighted, and the horse covered with a blanket, to keep him from taking a chill.—A drab coat with many capes, a shawl beneath, and another round the neck, a drive of two or three miles by lamplight. Just as you come up to the dogs, a gentleman comes forward to assist the mem sahiba from the buggy, saying, "Very cold! very cold! one could not be more delightfully cold in England—half-frozen!" Those fine dogs, Janpeter (Trumpeter) Racer, Merrylass, and the rest of them emerge from the palanquin carriage, in which they have been brought to Papamhow, much tamasha! many jackals! Then the canter through the plantations of Urrah, wet with dew—dew so heavy

that the syce wrings out the skirt of the mem sahib's habit; nevertheless, the lady and the black pony are very happy.

MRS PARKES (1834)

*

Neilgherry Sports. Hunting.

There was a very good pack of hounds in 1846 and an able man at the helm. I mean P——n; but it was of no avail; the country was not suited for hunting, and when P. left the Hills the dogs were sold. . . . O——n the straightest and hardest rider there told me that he got swamped twice in one morning (in trying to ride straight) and nearly ruined his horse. P——n I believe broke his leg. In fact you find considerable difficulty in walking up a hill; as for going down I hardly know how it was accomplished except by rolling down, or going in a zigzag direction, and as for the swamps their own depth in many places is unknown.

Indian Sporting Review (1849)

*

Dec. 21 (1809) This morning the gentlemen of our party joined those of the residency in a fox-chase, a favourite amusement of the young Englishmen here (Poona) although the heat always obliges them to quit the field by nine o'clock.

Nov. 25 (1810) The north winds are now so cold, that I find it necessary to wrap up in a shawl and fur tippet when I take my morning's ride upon one of the governor-general's elephants, from whose back I yesterday saw the Barrackpore hounds throw off in chase of a jackall; but here, as at Poona, the hunters usually return from the field before nine o'clock.

MARIA GRAHAM

*

The gentlemen of Poonah find their principal amusement in hog-hunting pic-nics, which until a late order, were usually enjoyed on consecutive Thursdays. In a tropical climate, hog-hunting is productive of almost necessary excitement, and is a

most agreeable variety to the monotony of camp existence. The dawn of an appointed day sees the ardent sportsman far on his way to the distant spot, where horse and friends await him. Here the tents are pitched, and the fluttering flag bears the wild boar for its ensign. After capital riding, over a fine and lovely country, the sport once past, spears lost and won, the wild boars dragged in triumph home, the beaters wearied and exhausted, reposing on the ground, the party, "all good fellows," adjourn to their encampment, open their stores of welcome and required refreshment, then

"Take the cup,
And drain it up,
To Snaffle, spur and spear."

MRS POSTANS (1838)

C— The Guns

The Chief of the *English Factory* (at *Carzvar*) is held in a very great Esteem in this Country, and when he goes a hunting, is generally accompanied with most Part of the People of Distinction in the Vicinage who bring their Vassals and Servants with them, armed with fire Arms and other Weapons, both missive and defensive, with Trumpets, Hautboys and Drums. The fire Men place themselves at convenient Distances, along the Skirts of an Hill or a Wood, except some that are sent in to guard those who are sent with their loud Musick to rouse the Game. The Drums, Trumpets and Hautboys spread themselves sometimes for a Mile or two, and, on a Signal given, strike up at once, and march towards the Skirt where the fire Men are placed. The wild Inhabitants being astonished with the unusual Noise, betake themselves to their Heels, and fall in the Ambuscade, and many of them are killed and wounded in their Flight. I saw, in one of the Huntings, above a Dozen of Deer killed, two wild Cows with their Calves, who would not leave their dead Parents, tho' they had done sucking; also four or five Sow\$, who had above a Dozen of Pigs following them, and were all killed, with some Pissays; and all in less than two Hours Space. The Hunters made good Cheer of what they lik'd best, and what remained was sent to the Factory; and the Chief soon following after, was conducted Home by the whole Company, and, at the Factory Gate, made him a Compliment, and **departed**. At this



time, which was *in Anno* 1692. the Factory had about a Score of good Dogs for Game, of *English* Brood, and the Company allowed each of them about 2 *lb.* of boyi'd Rice daily, but now they are better Husbands of their Money, and have discharged all their Dogs and other Superfluities, except one good old Custom of treating Strangers that come there from *Europe*, with pretty black female Dancers, who are very active in their Dancing, and free in their Conversation, where Shame is quite out of Fashion.

HAMILTON (*circa* 1720)

*

For our own Diversion here we had none beside Shooting, in which we spent sometimes a whole Week in the Woods and Rivers sides; for if we expected Flesh, or Fowl, we must take Pains for it; no Beef being to be Bought here, though up the Country from the *Moors* we could; so that our usual Diet was (besides plenty of Fish) Water-Fowl, Peacocks, Green Pidgeons, spotted Deer, Sabre, Wild Hogs, and sometimes Wild Cows. Going in quest whereof, one of our Soldiers, a Youth, killed a Tigre-Royal; it was brought home by Thirty or Forty *Combies*, the Body tied to a long Bamboo, the Tail extended; so they brought it to the House, where we saw 'twas Wounded in Three Places, one through the Head with Two Bullets, another through the Body slanting up to the Shoulders, a Third in the Leg; it was a Tigre of the Biggest and Noblest Kind, Five Feet in Length beside the Tail, Three and an half in Height, it was of a light Yellow, streaked with Black, like a Tabby Cat, the Ears short, with a few Bristles about the Lips; the Visage Fierce and Majestick, the Teeth gnashing, Two of which she brake against the Stones for anguish, the Shoulders and Fore-legs thick and well set, the Paw as Large as the biggest Fist stretched out, the Claws thick and strong.

The Boy Shot it in the Night from a *Chouse*, or *Estarzo*, as it came to Drink, supposing it to have been a Deer. . . .

FRYER (1673)

*

Sometimes the Young Men enter with a Gun or small Fowling-piece into the Fields and Inclosures adjoining to the Habitations of the *Bannian* and there make a show of shooting Sparrows, Turtle-Doves, or other small Birds among the Trees, which when the *Bannian* observes (as it is design'd he should) he runs in haste, as it were for Life, to bribe the Fowler, not only with courteous Expressions and fair Speeches, but with ready Money, not to persist in his Diversion; and drops in his Hand a Roupie or two to be gone, and not defile the Ground with the effusion of any Blood upon it; for all kind of Fowl are as dear to them, as ever the Dove was to *Semiramis*, or the Swan was unto *Philip*; and they entertain all their fellow Animals with a singular Esteem and kind Respect; and are at considerable Annual Expenses for preserving their Lives from Inhumanity and Death.

OVINGTON (1690)

*

The surrounding country abounds with beasts of prey, and game of every description. A gentleman lately engaged on a shooting party in the wilds of Plassey, gave us an account of their success in one month, from August the 15th to September the 14th, (1785) in which space they killed one royal tiger, six wild buffaloes, one hundred and eighty-six hog-deer, twenty-five wild hogs, eleven antelopes, three foxes, thirty-five hares, one hundred and fifty brace of partridges and floricans, with quails, ducks, snipes, and smaller birds in abundance.

FORBES

*

We are credibly informed that a party of sportsmen, in the neighbourhood of Berhampore, speared, without the assistance of dogs, in thirteen days, forty hog deer and eighty-six wild hogs.

Calcutta Gazette, 19th August, 1790

*

Neilgherry Sport

*List of Game killed by a Gentleman in the Neilgherries
within the last six months.*

Thirty-three and a half couple of woodcock; 30 head of black deer, commonly known as elk, one of which was measured, and proved 14 hands 2 inches; 1 jungle sheep; 3 wild dogs; 7 bears; 7 hogs; 1 royal tiger, length 9 feet 7 inches; 1 cheeta; 100 brace and upward of jungle fowl and spur fowl; 20 brace and more of hares, some weighing as much as an English hare; 12 brace or more of peafowl; brace of quail, often 8 or 10 brace a day; snipe, often 4 or 5 brace a day; imperial pigeon, about 20 brace.

The royal tiger he dropped dead with one ball in front of Rullia, 10 miles from Ootacamund. Such a list of killed and bagged may highly excite hopes of sporting visitors to these regions, but it must be borne in mind that such a staunch and indefatigable sportsman as Captain R. is rarely to be found."

Oriental Sporting Magazine; Octr., 1829

*

"Arrived on the spot, the different sportsmen take their stations along the side and at the bottom of the wood, in the places most likely for the game to break. The dogs being all in hand, are held out of sight and hearing behind the brow of the Hill, and when the sportsmen have taken up their positions, the master of the chase sounds his horn, and every dog rushes into the wood. If it be large—and sometimes they are of two or three miles in extent—nothing is heard for a few minutes but the dog-boys cheering the pack; some hound then strikes upon the scent or catches a view, and then begins the stimulating cry of the dogs, and every sportsman anxiously looks out for elk, bear, or jungle sheep. Those who are getting into the 'sere and yellow leaf', and whose limbs are not so pliant with the oil of youth as formerly, are best placed on some neighbouring tree or rock, where the tracks and fresh soil of the elk are to be seen, and where no active efforts need be made. Here also they are less likely to shoot themselves or others. . . . The youth, who is active and has a good ear to distinguish the distance of the dogs and the line of the chase, who has speed and strength and a steady

hand, notwithstanding the exertion of running, will enjoy this noble sport in its finest form, by following the hounds on the outside of the wood, as they descend in the inside."

JERVIS,

*A Journey to the Falls of the Cauvery
and the Neilgherry Hills (1831-33)*

(The best dogs were "bred from a cross of a large fox-hound and a good bull-bitch . . . and with the addition of a number of excellent Scotch terriers and some fine pointers or setters taught to chase, great sport has been obtained.")

*

The peculiarity of Neilgherry hunting is, that nothing can be done by means of beaters only—the plan adopted in India generally. Cocks cannot be flushed without spaniels, and fox-hounds are necessary for tracking large game. The canine species thrives prodigiously on the hills, and seems to derive even more benefit from the climate than the human dogs. The crack sportsman from the plains must here abandon his favourite pig-sticking, or exchange it for what he always considered the illicit practice of hog-shooting. *En revanche*, he has the. . . bison and the ibex. . . .

Bison-hunting upon the hills is a most exciting sport, requiring thews and sinews, a cool head and a steady hand. A charge of one of these animals is no joke: Venator had better make sure of his nerve before he goes forth to stand before such a rush. The bison . . . are usually shot with ounce or two ounce iron or brass balls, and plugs made by the hill-people, who cut a bar of metal and file it down to the size required with the rudest tools and remarkable neatness. . . .

The word "ibex" like the "jungle sheep" of the Neilgherries, is a misnomer: the denominated being the *Capra Caucasica*, not the *Capra Ibex* of Cuvier. . . . If you are sportsman enough to like difficulty and danger, incurred for nothing's sake, you will think well of ibex-hunting. In the first place you have to find your game, and to find it also in some place where it can be approached when alive and secured when dead. . . . Secondly, you must hit them—hard, too; otherwise you will never bring about a dead stop. And lastly, as they are addicted to scrambling *

down and rolling over tremendous precipices—especially after they have felt lead—you must either lose the beast or risk your neck to bag the body.

BURTON (1847)

*

Dec. 18 (1824). Edward got up this morning at 4, to go with the Governor (of Goa) to shoot at a lake where he said there were an abundance of Wild Ducks, but they all turned out to be Birds like Moor Hens, with green legs and brown plumage, and another large bird with beautiful purple plumage, red legs and beak, and called here Gallino, all said to be good eating and which the Sportsmen in this country all shoot *sitting*.

LADY WEST



VI—FUN AND GAMES

This section is intended to cover indoor as opposed to outdoor amusements—although Picnics have crept into it on the ground that their most enthusiastic votaries would hardly class them as a Sport. Beyond dividing up the material under sub-heads—Dancing, Theatricals, Games and so on—the Anthologist seems to have no comment to make.

A—Music

We have been uncommonly gay at Simla this year, and have had some beautiful tableaux with music, and one or two very well acted farces, which are a happy change from the everlasting quadrilles, and everybody has been pleased and amused, except the two clergymen who are here, and who have begun a course of sermons against what they call a destructive torrent of worldly gaiety. They had much better preach against the destructive torrent of rain which has now set in for the next three months, and not only washes away all gaiety, but all the paths, in the literal sense, which lead to it. At least I know the last storm has washed away the paths to Government House.

The whole amount of gaiety has been nine evening parties in three months—six here, and three at other houses. Our parties begin at half-past eight, and at twelve o'clock we always get up and make our courtesies and everybody goes at once. Instead of dancing every time, we have had alternations of tableaux and charades, and the result has been three Aides-de-Camp engaged to three very nice English girls, and the dismissal of various native Mrs Aides-de-Camp.

MISS EDEN (1839)

*

Soon after my return to town (Calcutta) I was elected a member of the Catch Club, one of the pleasantest societies I ever belonged to, but unpopular with the ladies, no female being admitted. It was originally established by some musical men,

seceders from a meeting called the Harmonic, at which the younger people of both sexes being more pleased with their own rattling chatter and noise, paid no attention to the sweet strains of Corelli and other famous composers, and thereby gave great offence to the real lovers of music. A party thereupon resolved to establish a sort of club, where none of the profane should gain admittance and women to be excluded altogether. . . . I was also a member of the old Harmonic, which, upon the establishment of the new one, sunk into a mere dance. The young women facetiously termed the new meeting, "The He Harmonic." . . . Upon its coming to my turn to preside, I gave the master of the house private directions as soon as the clock struck two (a.m.) to introduce some kettles of burnt champagne, a measure that was highly applauded by all. . . . We sat until an hour after sunrise. From that night it became an established rule to have burnt champagne the moment it was two o'clock.

HICKEY (1778)

*

I felt far more gratified some time ago, when Mrs Jackson procured me a ticket for the Harmonic which was supported by a select number of gentlemen who each in alphabetical rotation gave a concert, ball, and supper, during the cold season; I believe once a fortnight. . . . We had a great deal of delightful music and Lady Chambers, who is a capital performer on the harpsichord, played among other pieces a Sonata of Nicolai's in a most brilliant style. A gentleman who was present and who seemed to be quite charmed with her execution, asked me the next evening, if I did not think the *jig* Lady C-played the night before, was the prettiest thing I ever heard? He meant the rondo which is remarkably lively; but I dare say "Over the water to Charley" would have pleased him equally well.

Mrs Hastings was of the party; she came in late. . . .

MRS FAY (1781)

*

"I can give you very little news from this place (Madras). We have a ball monthly, by subscription, which makes us rather

less dull than heretofore; no marriages on foot nor any talked of. I do not recollect whether Miss Maule became Mrs Wickens before you left us. On his side I believe it was more a match of *interest* than of *love*. She appears several years older than her hubby. Rather unfortunate that! Proposals for a concert are going about; how long it will last who shall presume to say. Many of the performers, both vocal and instrumental, must necessarily be ladies and gentlemen. It will be an agreeable way of passing what otherwise might hastily be pronounced a stupid evening

The *Crocodile* from Bengal is just anchored in the roads. Pretty daring of her captain to venture here in the height of the monsoon."

*Letter from Mrs Barclay to Mrs Hickey.
Madras, 20th November, 1783*

B— *Theatricals*

The stage is a fixture and the ingenuity displayed in making the most of a very circumscribed sphere of action is a matter for admiration. The side scenes are but three, and are on triangular frames, which revolve. One side exhibits nature in its wildest mood—beautiful pea-green trees, with dabs of various colours to portray the wild flowers of the forest. Turn the scene and you are plunged at once into the retirement of domestic and civilised life—a book shelf in a *neglige'* state and the portrait of a flaxen-headed cowboy doing something o'er the lea; . . . and thirdly, masses of brown ochre are designed to represent rocks or whatever fancy may suggest. The back scenes are a corresponding trio that roll up—one a wood . . . with a circular cut in a dab of sky for the addition of a gentle moon when requisite. Then we have an interior which, by a judicious arrangement of properties . . . can equally represent the boudoir for interviews with unfavouring papas, or the drawing-room where scenes in connection with bended knees are commonly enacted. . . . Lastly we have a dungeon, for the express benefit of gentlemen who have got solos to communicate.

Curry and Rice (1859)



We have had a ball (at Meerut) on Wednesday from the artillery; a play on Thursday by amateurs—'Rob Roy'—and 'Die Vernon' acted by a very tall lancer with an immense flaxen wig, long ringlets hanging in an infantine manner over his shoulders, short sleeves, and, as Meerut does not furnish gloves, large white arms with very red hands. Except in Calcutta, such a thing as an actress does not exist, so this was thought a very good 'Die Vernon;' but I hear that 'Juliet' and 'Desdemona' are supposed to be his best parts.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

Kirkee is a small but pretty cantonment, long the station of her Majesty's fourth dragoons, a corps whose social qualities among the officers, and excellent conduct of the men, can never permit their leaving India without the deep regret of every individual, who may have been associated with them, either as friends, or fellow-soldiers. A short time since, a small sum was raised by subscription, and the dragoons were given the permission of either building a church, or erecting a theatre, at Kirkee. The interest of the drama prevailed, and a very neat little edifice, decorated with appropriate scenery, and all the necessities for stage effect, soon became a source of considerable amusement at the station. While the officers contributed their talents to the

theatre at Poonah, the men tore passion to the very rags at Kirkee; and a gaunt, red-whiskered sergeant of dragoons, might be seen attired in very appropriate female costume, melting in sentimental grief, over the pangs of unrequited love, or the heart-breaking miseries of perjured faith. Tragic and touching scenes having the preference, bathos reigned supreme; and some



becoming authors, as well as actors, (their early lack of education compelling the employment of an amanuensis,) those who possessed a sense of the ridiculous in any great degree, would have found eminent amusement at the Kirkee theatre.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

*

Theatre

The Calcutta Theatre is not an object of equal criticism. . . . In the late performance of the *Revenge*, the representative of

Alonzo appeared to us alone entitled to the eulogium due to eminence, and the well known talents of Mr P. render it unnecessary to say more . . . than that he . . . exhibited the character he now assumed with the same success as he did that of Zanga on a former occasion. . . . To the remainder, we can only return our thanks for their desire to entertain us.

Calcutta Gazette, 6th May, 1790

•

C—Dancing

Wednesday Sept 21st (1774) . . . If splendor accompanied Heat, a Ball in India ought to be uncommonly splendid. The appearance of the Ladies even before Country Dances was rather ardent than luminous, when the Minuets are ended they go home with their Partners to undress, and after a little Refreshment return again in the purest Innocence of Muslin and the Simplicity of a Nightgown. The Zeal and activity with which they exert themselves in Country dances is exercise enough for the spectators. By dint of Motion these Children of the Sun, in a very few minutes, get as hot as their Father and then it is not safe to approach them. In this agitation they continue, literally swimming through the dance till he comes himself and reminds them of the hour.

Mackrabie's Journal (Written in Madras)

*

The Byculla Race Stand contains an assembly room for ladies, forty-eight feet Jong, twenty-four broad; tint of the walls, maiden's blush; admirably adapted for dinners and balls on a limited scale.

Bombay Courier, 1st January, 1822

*

The walls (of the Assembly Rooms) are resonant again with the sounds of jollity and preparation. The sable pagan has started into activity, and the dusty chandeliers once more glitter

in their joy; the crimson-edged flounces of the punkahs, fresh from the hands of the *blanchisseur*, glimmer with spotless purity. The stewards, indefatigable fellows, defiant of all heat, devote themselves to the rigid lacing-up of the floor-cloth; and the once bare walls, with their sickly hue of pale yellow-wash, are now gay and verdant with wreaths.

Curry and Rice (1859)

*

Fashionables

Mrs Munfs Party—On Thursday evening this accomplished and elegant female gave a most splendid Ball and Supper to her friends at her Gardens on Choultry Plain (Madras). To those acquainted with the taste and magnificence which ever characterised the entertainments given by this Lady, it were only necessary to state that every thing was conducted in her usual stile (*sic*). The dance ... continued until near one o'clock—when the Company were refreshed with a most excellent Supper. Ice and Champaign were among the delicacies of the Table, and it was at a very late hour yesterday morning that the Company took a reluctant leave of this enchanting and hospitable entertainment.

Calcutta Gazette, 16th August, 1810

(*Mrs Munt had evidently had the foresight to do "our Correspondent" well!*)

Compare

The Honourable Lady Hood's Parties

The splendid and well conducted parties given by this fashionable and interesting female . . . have given universal satisfaction. . . . On Tuesdays the Dance occupies the greater part of the evening; and on the Saturdays, Music, by Amateur performers.

A Supper, at Side Tables, is provided on both occasions, consisting of Sand-wiches, Fruits, Jellies, and other refreshments. . . . The hour of assembly being early, nine o'clock, the

Company are enabled to leave the Gardens, before twelve, an improvement we could wish to see universal.

Madras Gazette, 10th July, 1813

*

The Masquerade on Monday night was conducted very much to the satisfaction of the Company. The rooms and tents were fitted up with taste, in a style entirely new to this country.

The following were the most remarkable characters:

Huncamunca, an admirable mask, and astonishingly well supported the whole night.

An Oxonian, by a Lady, who supported the character with great spirit.

Three admirable Sailors, who sung a glee.

A very good Milkmaid.

A Naggah, very capital.

A smart Ballad Singer, but was so modest she could not venture to sing.

Calcutta Gazette, 24th March, 1785

*

The third Bachelors* Ball took place on last Wednesday evening and was conducted with the same hospitality and success as the two preceding. . . . The fourth mask was that of a lady dressed in the extravagance of the present fashion; her back half exposed, her petticoats so short, as to have at least eight inches above the ankle visible, and her head crowned with large bunches of roses. . . . She soon succeeded in getting a partner, and after going "down a country dance, left the inquisitive assembly in wonder who it could be?

Calcutta Gazette, 13th February, 1817

*

The ball was much like a London ball in look, only the uniforms make it look more dressed, and there is more space for dancing. They dance away as if they were not in a furnace, and

instead of resting between the dances they walk round the room in pairs. There were few young ladies, but some young brides, and they all seem to dance on to a most respectable old age. Several mothers of grown-up daughters never missed a quadrille or waltz; they were all very well dressed, and seemed to take pains to be so. Came home 12 p.m. (*sic*). Our new aide-de-camp, Captain——, mentioned that he was not going home with us, and I believe he slunk back, after putting us in our carriage, to have a good dance. It cannot be such a bad climate, or the old gentlemen who were figuring away at this ball would not be so active.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

There are many places in the neighbourhood of Ooty—such as Dodabetta, Fair Lawn and others—where, during the fine season, the votaries of Terpsichore display very fantastic toes indeed, particularly if they wear Neilgherry-made boots, between the hours of ten A.M. and five P.M. Much innocent mirth prevails on these social occasions, the only remarkable characteristic of their nature being, that the gentlemen generally ride out slowly and deliberately, but ride in, racing, or steeple-chasing, or enacting Johnny Gilpin.

BURTON (1847)

*

There are about half-a-dozen balls a year on the Neilgherries, the cause of their infrequency being the expense, and the unpopularity of the amusement amongst all manner and description of men, save and except the "squire of dames" only. . . .

At eleven or twelve the ladies muster. The band—a trio of fiddlers, and a pianist who performs on an instrument which suggests reminiscences of Tubal Cain—strikes up. The dancing begins—one eternal round of quadrilles, lancers, polkas, and waltzes. There is no difficulty in finding partners; the "wall-flower", an ornament unknown to the ball-room in India generally, here blooms and flourishes luxuriantly as in our beloved fatherland. . . . About one o'clock there is a break for supper—a hot substantial meal of course;—the dancing that

follows is strikingly of a more spirited nature than that which preceded it. . . . At three P. (*sic*) M. the ladies retire, apparently to the regret, really to the delight of the bachelors, who, with gait and gestures expressive of the profoundest satisfaction, repair to the supper-room for another hot and substantial meal. The conversation is lively: the toilettes, manners, conversation and dancing of the fair sex are blamed or extolled *selon*; . . . the cigars are lighted, spirits mixed, and the singing commences. This performance is usually of the style called at messes the "sentimental" wherein a long chorus is a *sine qua non*, the usual accompaniments a little horse-play in different parts of the room. . . . At length Aurora comes slowly in, elbowing her way, and sidling through the dense waves of rolling smoke. . . . Phoebus looks red and lowering at the prospect of the dozen gentlemen, who, in very pallid complexions, black garments, and patent leather boots, wind, with frequent halts, along a common road, leading, as each conceives, directly to his own abode.

BURTON (1847)

*

Nothing damps their ardour—not even Himalayan rain, which effectually damps everything else. There is a ball, for instance, at the Club House; it is raining cataracts and has been doing so for twenty hours. The mountain paths are knee-deep in mud, and swept by many a turbid torrent rattling from above. Great masses of thunder-cloud come looming up, rumbling, crashing, and blazing upon a sodden, reeking world. The night is black as Tartarus, save where the frequent flashes light it up with a momentary glare. The road is steep, rough, and not too safe. A false step might send you several thousand feet down the precipice into the valley below. Will all this prevent Jones the Collector and Brown the Policeman and Smith of the Irregular Cavalry putting their respective ladies into palanquins, mounting their ponies like men and finding their way, through field and flood, to the scene of dissipation? Each will ensconce himself in a panoply of indiarubber and require a great deal of peeling before becoming presentable in a ballroom; but each will get himself peeled and dance till four o'clock. The ladies will emerge from their palanquins as fresh and bright and ambrosial as lace

and tarlatan can make them. . . . The night outside is Tartarean, certainly, but within there is nothing but light, music and mirth.

Chronicles of Dusty pore (1877)

D— Celebrations

New Year's Day

A very large and respectable company, in consequence of the invitation given by the Right Hon'ble the Governor General, assembled on Tuesday (New Year's Day) at the Old Court House, where an elegant dinner was prepared. The toasts were as usual echoed from the cannon's mouth, and merited this distinction from their loyalty and patriotism.

In the evening the Ball exhibited a circle, less extensive but equally brilliant and beautiful with that which graced the entertainment in honor of the King's birthday. . . . The supper tables presented every requisite to gratify the most refined Epicurean. The ladies soon resumed the pleasures of the dance, and knit the rural braid, in emulation of the Poet's Sister Graces, till four in the morning, while some disciples of the Jolly God of wine testified their satisfaction in Poeans of exultation.

Calcutta Gazette, 3rd January, 1788

*

St Andrew's Day

4th December, 1794

Anniversary of Saint Andrew

On Monday last the Anniversary of Saint Andrew was celebrated by a respectable and numerous company of gentlemen, assembled at the theatre. . . . At half past four the rooms began to fill, and upwards of two hundred guests had assembled by five o'clock, when the joyous sound of the bagpipe summoned to the festive board, where profusion and elegance were happily united.

A variety of other toasts and sentiments succeeded; two in particular, suggested by a visitor, viz., "may the British Constitution pervade the earth, and trample Anarchy under foot",



The Sahib at Play

"may the British Empire in all its parts ever exhibit the same harmony and unanimity that animate the present company*'; were received under loud and unanimous plaudits.

The exhilarating tone of the bagpipe lent its aid and diffused such joy over every Caledonian countenance, as to affect by sympathy the whole company. The hours glided away, the bottle had a rapid circulation, the room resounded with loyalty, and every nerve vibrated with joy; never did more harmony or conviviality preside over the affairs of Saint or Hero.

jth November, 1805

Anniversary of St Andrew for 1805

It is hereby notified to the sons of St Andrew at or near the Presidency, who have not yet subscribed to the entertainment to be given on the 30th instant, that a paper is at Carlier and Scornee's rooms for subscription.

Subscription this year fixed at fifty Rupees each.

3rd December, 1812

Anniversary of St Andrew

Monday last, the 30th November ... a numerous and highly respectable party of Caledonians, accompanied by nearly an equal number of English and Irish Guests, forming a Company of upwards of a hundred, assembled at 7 o'clock in the evening at Moore's Rooms. . . .

The hilarity and social spirit of the evening . . . detained the numerous company at table, without the desertion of a single individual, till 3 o'clock in the following morning; at that time an interval was devoted to dancing, and a few Scotch Reels were executed with a high degree of vivacity. After the exercise of the dance, the company returned to the table; and at half past six on Tuesday morning about 18 or 20 jovial souls . . . finished the festivities of St Andrew with 'God Save the King' in full chorus.

Calcutta Gazette, passim

(In the matter of St Andrew's Dinners Bombay seems to have lagged somewhat behind Calcutta. But I do find that on November

20th, 1825, a small party at Mr Cresselmaris Hotel there held a St Andrew's Dinner. There was haggis and Glenlivet.)

The King's Birthday

The 4th (June, 1797) being His Majesty's birthday I resolved to pay due honour thereto. I had procured a very fine turtle and half of a tolerably fat deer, engaging an eminent French cook from Calcutta to dress the dinner. . . . I had taken especial care to lay in a *quantum sufficit* of the best champagne that was procurable, my claret, hock, and madeira I knew were not to be surpassed in Bengal. The day went off with the utmost hilarity and good humour. . . . General St Leger in the course of the evening sang "The British Grenadiers" with high spirit; in short in such perfect harmony were the whole party that we did not break up until between two and three o'clock in the morning, when my guests retired to their respective apartments.

At ten o'clock the following morning the majority reassembled to breakfast when all complained more or less of headache or slight sickness, except the gay young Captain De Lancy, who protested he never was better in his life. . . . "A hair of the same dog" on the 5th set all the complainers to rights, and the scene of the preceding day was renewed.

HICKEY (1797)

E—Picnics and Fêtes

A *fete-champetre* announced as to be given by Mr Edward Fenwick, a gentleman high in the Civil Service, entirely engaged the public attention and conversation during the greater part of the month of May. It was intended to be celebrated at his country house, situated upon the banks of the river, in Garden Reach, about five miles from Calcutta. . . . The gardens were to be brilliantly illuminated with many thousand coloured lamps; an eminent operator in fireworks had been brought down from Lucknow to display his talents; the company to appear in fancy dresses, those that chose it to wear masks. Ranges of tents were fixed in different parts of the gardens, wherein tables were laid covered with all the dainties the best French cooks could produce, for the accommodation of three hundred persons, besides which every room in the house was stored with refreshments

of every sort and kind; different bands of martial music were stationed in several parts of the gardens, and also in the house, with appropriate and distinct performers for the dancers. The last two miles of the road were lighted up with a double row of lamps on each side, making every object clear as day. In short, nothing could exceed the splendour of the preparations for this rural entertainment.

HICKEY (1784)

(It was at this grand party that Hickey disgraced himself by arriving very drunk after a spill in his "phaeton"—though to do him justice, it was all part of his attempt to drown his sorrows after his Charlotte's death.)

*

Our aides-de-camp gave a small fete champetre yesterday in a valley called Annandale. The party, consisting of six ladies and six gentlemen, began at ten in the morning, and actually lasted till half-past nine at night. Annandale is a thick grove of fir-trees, which no sun can pierce. They had bows and arrows, a swing, battledore and shuttlecock, and a fiddle—the only fiddle in Simla; and they danced and eat all day, and seem to have liked it all throughout wonderfully.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

There never was so successful a fete (as at Annandale). More English than anything I have seen in this country. Giles and Wright went off at seven in the morning with my goods; and at ten Mr C. came to go down with me. Annandale is a beautiful valley, about two miles off, full of large pine trees. Colonel V. had erected a long booth for the ladies who kept stalls and there were mottoes and devices over each of them. 'The Bower of Eden' was in the centre. Before we came to the booth, there was a turnpike gate with a canvass cottage and an immense board, 'The Auckland toll bar,' and Captain P. dressed up as an old woman who kept the gate. On one side there was the Red Cow, kept by some of the uncovenanted who spoke excellent Irish, and whose jokes and brogue were really very good. There was

a large tent opposite the booth for G. (her brother, the Governor-General), and in every part of the valley there were private tents sent by careful mothers for their ayahs and children. There were roundabouts for the natives. W. O. and three of the aides-de-camp kept a skittle-ground, with sticks to throw at, and a wheel of fortune, and a lucky bag, which had great success. G. and F. (her Sister) came soon after eleven, and the selling went off with great rapidity. The native servants had had great consultations whether it would be respectful to buy at my stall, and there were only two or three who arrived at the pitch of assurance; but they were all present, dressed in their finest shawls, and they all thought it very amusing.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

Mr D——invited us to a picnic at Bhadraj (near Mussoorie); we selected a spot under a fine oak tree on the estate at Cloud End; numberless amusements were provided for us; a champagne tiffin was pleasant under the old oak tree; and a dinner, rich and rare, finished the amusements of the day. When the moon arose we mounted our ponies; and as the road lay through the dark shade of the trees, and on the edge of precipices, we determined to be careful, and agreed to muster three times on our journey of six miles, to see that none of the party had fallen into the khud. Away we cantered through the beautiful moonlight, almost racing our ponies. . . . We reached home at half-past eleven, after a beautiful ride and a pleasant day.

MRS PARKES (1838)

F—Games

"There will be tents for the ladies, and as the cricketers are all to be dressed in an appropriate uniform, we anticipate one of the most gay and animated scenes that has ever graced our island.

"We feel infinite pleasure in announcing amusements which tend to counteract the effects of this enervating climate, by raising the spirits from apathy, and the physical powers from that feminine indolence which is generally rewarded by pre-

mature old age, skin hanging in drapery, and muscles reduced to pack thread.*

Notice in Bombay paper, 1825

*

There has been a cargo of traps and balls sent out by some of the last ships, and we played at trap and ball yesterday evening, which put me so in mind of B——Hall.——never played before, and never could hit the ball, and it was new to most of the gentlemen, who borrowed the trap that they may practise a little this morning.

MISS EDEN (1840)

G—Gambling

The demand for tickets in the Calcutta lottery is astonishingly great. A society of Gentlemen have subscribed for 500 tickets. The wheels are making by Nicholls and Howat, upon the same construction as those used for the State lotteries in England.

Calcutta Gazette, 13 th May 1784

*

"You must know, my friend, that on one blessed day of the present year of our Lord (1776) I had won about £20000 at Whist. It is reduced to about £12000 and I now never play but for trifles, and that only once a week."

Sir Philip Francis in a letter to Godfrey

(The author of the unreliable "Intrigues of a Nabob" says Harwell lost to Francis £40,000.)

H—Shows

Mermaid and Sea Monster's Head

Just brought in on the Ship *Indian Oak*, the first that have ever been seen in India. These natural curiosities were found on the beach at Olraga by some Fishermen, and brought to the Emperor's Court at Jedo, the Capital of Japan. . . . The greatest

care has been taken of them, and the Mermaid in particular is in the most perfect state, and well worthy the notice of the Public. The esteemed value of this once supposed fabulous creature **may be** in some measure estimated by the numerous offers received for the purchase of it, the last of which was the sum of Sicca Rupees 9000, and this sum was refused.... Terms of admission for each person Sicca Rupees 6 Cash.

N.B.—No credit can upon any account be allowed.

Calcutta Gazette, 27th March, 1823

*

The Proprietor of the Panorama of the Battle of Waterloo most respectfully informs the Public, that it will be opened for inspection on Monday next. Admission for the first few days only, by the advice of his Friends, Five Rupees, instead of Three; Children half price.

Calcutta Gazette, 21st November, 1817



VII—CULTURE

*It would be a mistake to allow the levities of the preceding section to persuade us that the life of the Sahib was all beer and skittles ; a corrective section on Science, Art and Reading seems required. One is obliged to admit, however, the melancholy fact that the Sahib*s prowess through the years in the field of culture was downwards rather than upwards, his tendency from height to lowness of brow. The booksellers' lists as advertised in the newspapers of the Nabob era display an array of titles of the most formidable and discouraging order and there appears to have been practically no attempt to cater for the lighter side of literature at all; yet these weighty tomes must have sold readily or no merchant would have gone to the great labour and expense of bringing them out. But the taste for heavy reading—like the fine classical and Persian scholarships of the period—did not last; even by the time of Miss Eden {no nit-wit} a lighter pabulum was in demand. (" The more trash the better".) And in India, as elsewhere, the first eager interest in applied science did not develop on anything like general lines. Were such people as Mrs Parkes, with her " Aeolian harps" and her "chemical experiments", more serious-minded than the generations who succeeded them; or only more naive?*

Thursday 6th November, 1788

Experimental Philosophy

It is desired, on account of the dispatch of the Packet, and the meeting of the Asiatic Society this evening, that the Lectures on Experimental Philosophy be deferred to Tuesday next, . . .

The gentlemen who subscribe have the privilege of introducing the Ladies who may wish to honor this attempt with their presence.

4th December, 1794

Doctor Dinwiddie gave his first lecture on Electricity on Tuesday evening, to a very numerous and polite audience

who appeared to be highly entertained by the experiments. The Doctor will give his second lecture on Tuesday next.

30th October, 1794

Dr Dinwiddie begs leave to inform the ladies and gentlemen of Calcutta that he proposes to begin a course of lectures on experimental philosophy, at his house, No. 7 Council Street, on Monday the 17th of November next.

Calcutta Gazette, passim

(In the "Gazette" of 15th November, 1804, the indefatigable Dr Dinwiddie writes to the Editor, enclosing correspondence relating to his cure of the St Vitus' dance which afflicted a Miss Jane Willocks aged ten, an orphan. Dr Dinwiddie tried galvanism, employing a power of "sixty to eighty, and sometimes even a hundred pair."

The cure was completely successful—at any rate for the time being. The patient's behaviour was exemplary; "when I sometimes took in, by stealth," says the Doctor, "the whole battery of a hundred pair, which gives a shock sufficient to make some of the stoutest of my male friends rub their elbows, and look comically at each other, my little patient only rebuked me with a smile." Dr D offered to "take the liberty of troubling the editor on some future occasion" with some equally remarkable cures of rheumatism and palsy; but these have not been traced.)

*

.... even within six years material alterations have occurred to un-Indianize (if I may be allowed the term) the social condition of Bombay. The present rapid communication with Europe has introduced a very superior class of ideas and interests; and among other advantages, are many of a literary kind—reviews, papers, periodicals, and books, arrive before their novelty is dimmed in Europe; thus all intelligence of interest is discussed, and every means of gaining information easily acquired.

General topics of policy or news, warm conversation, made up before of far less worthy matter; and the arts and graces of life **no** longer fade, for want of material to renew their charms. The new music of an opera may be procured before its first season is

past; and the ladies of the Presidency can appear as fashionably attired during the evening drive on the esplanade, as a Parisian belle, lolling in her elegant britska, on the Champs Elysées.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

(The "present rapid communication" presumably refers to the opening of the Overland Route from Suez across Egypt in 1830.)

*

We have spent the last three weeks most delightfully at Papamhow (near Allahabad). Every sort of scientific amusement was going forward. Painting in oil and water colours, sketching from nature, turning, making curious articles in silver and brass, constructing Aeolian harps, amusing ourselves with archery, trying the rockets on the sands of an evening, chemical experiments, botany, gardening; in fact the day was never half long enough for our employment in the workshop and the grounds.

MRS PARKES (1827)

*

My husband has the management of the ice concern (at Allahabad) this year. It is now in full work, the weather bitterly cold, and we are making ice by evaporation almost every night. . . . When the weather in December is cold enough to induce us to suppose water will freeze at night with artificial aid, the business of ice-making commences. At the bottom of the keearees, the shallow square beds, a black-looking straw is spread about a foot in depth. . . . The straw in the shallow beds must be kept perfectly dry, to produce evaporation and the freezing of the water in the little pans placed upon it; should rain fall, the straw must be taken up and thoroughly dried before it can again be used. . . . If the night be frosty, without wind, the ice will form perhaps an inch and a half in thickness in the pans. If a breeze should blow, it will often prevent the freezing of the water. . . . If the formation of ice was sufficiently thick, the tom-tom was heard, and the shivering coolies would collect, wrapped up in black bazar blankets. . . . Each cooly, armed with a spud, knocked the ice out of the little pans into a basket . . .

ran with it to the ice-house and threw it down the great pit. . . . Four at a time descended into the pit by a ladder, and beat down the ice collected there into a hard, flat mass. . . . When all the ice was firmly beaten down, it was covered in with mats, over which a quantity of straw was piled, and the door of the ice-house locked... . For the art of freezing cream ices to perfection and the method of making them in India, I refer you to the Appendix. (*Where very detailed recipes indeed are given.*)

Calcutta was supplied, in 1833, with fine clear ice from America sent in enormous blocks, which sold at . . . about two pence a pound; this ice is greatly superior to that made in India. . . . It is not as an article of luxury only that ice is delightful in this climate, medicinally it is of great use; there is much virtue in an iced night-cap to a fevered head.

MRS PARKES (1828)

(From Mrs Parkes' Appendix it appears that the "freezing mixture" used was sal ammoniac, common salt and saltpetre. Mrs Parkes also gives—in March of 1831—a long description of the thermantidote—"a structure awful to behold", "an enormous machine" (it was seven feet high by four or five feet broad by nine, ten or twelve feet long) "for forcing cool air into the house." It had four fans worked by two men turning an axle outside the house. While these activities are not, strictly speaking, scientific, a place may perhaps be allowed them here.)

*

About this period (1787) two artists of splendid talents, the Messrs Daniell, uncle and nephew, arrived in Bengal; and as I was always as great an encourager of merits as my humble means would allow, I not only subscribed myself but procured many other names to a work which they commenced upon of drawing and engraving in *aqua tinta*, twelve views of different parts of Calcutta; they completed them within a twelvemonth, but being the first attempt they proved very inferior to many subsequent performances.

HICKEY (1787) ,

A Card

Mr Hone presents his compliments to the Ladies and Gentlemen of this Settlement, and proposes to lay apart three days in the week for the purpose of teaching Drawing and Painting. Those Ladies or Gentlemen who wish to be taught that polite Art by Mr Hone, may know his terms by sending a *chit*, or waiting on him at his house in the Rada Bazaar.

Calcutta Gazette, 21st April, 1785

*

It is difficult to sketch here ____ Once, in a secluded part of the city (Poona) I had sat down in a corner, with my servant standing near me, and was about to begin a very pretty subject, when an elephant passed, nearly treading on my feet; in a few minutes, a large buffalo came sharply round a corner, and, startled at the sight of me, turned back, raising up a considerable quantity of dust. Then the children rushed out of their houses, and ran about; the women came to the doors to look at me; the fakirs and "saints" too stopped to wonder at me—no doubt they all thought me insane. At last, a herd of cows and goats were driven by, and as the dust not only shut out my view, but completely covered my paper and the inside of my colour-box, I went to the carriage in despair.

LADY FALKLAND (1848)

*

A Private Boarding School

Where only a small number of children (not exceeding sixteen) will be taught English and French by able masters. A convenient and airy house, situated in a healthy part of Calcutta, is taken for that purpose, and the school is now open for the reception of children. For particulars, please to enquire at the Library.

Calcutta Gazette, 24th June, 1784

*

I went this morning to an examination of the European female orphans; the school is very well managed now by the mistress, but it is rather distressing to see European children examined after natives. Even——, who is against native education says it is the most surprising difference possible. Little natives of seven years old will go through the longest sums and give definitions of English words, and are quite ready at little details of English history, and they are all panting with eagerness. These girls looked quite *put out*, and became quite silent after the governess had told them to *speak up* once or twice, and, though all of them knew how much five times fifteen was, the whole first class failed in guessing how much fifteen times five was. I own it is very difficult, but then I am a stupid European.

MISS EDEN (1841)

*

The books contained in the following list are missing from the Library of the College of Fort William. It is requested that any Gentleman who may have borrowed them or into whose possession they may have come, will return them to the Librarian of the College:—

Hyde's Opuscula.

Bibliotheca Graeca Fabricii, vol. 13

Cruden's Concordance.

Harris's Hermes.

The Private Life of the Romans.

Gibbs's Designs.

Vince's Astronomy.

Calcutta Gazette, November 1807

(A curiously ponderous collection and a serious-minded borrower or thief!)

*

The English editions of novels are to be had here for about three guineas apiece. They charge rupees for shillings, and a rupee is about two shillings and a penny. I have bought quantities of American editions of English books; but then it is a bore

waiting till a work is two years old before one reads it. The Americans are valuable creatures at this distance. They send us novels, ice, and apples—three things that, as you may guess, are not indigenous to the soil.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

There was such a good set of American editions of English books advertised to-day, that I sent off forthwith and bought Mrs Butler's *Journal* and Theresa Lister's novel, 'Anne Grey,' and one of Lady Morgan's novels and another book, all for ten rupees; and George grumbles at them every time he picks one off the table; but as we are cut off from English editions and from all other amusement, I am thankful for these. I tried at an English shop for some books, and they asked 2 1. for Poole's 'Scenes and Recollections,' and 3 1. for the commonest novels in three vols. They have no French novels.

MISS EDEN (1836)

*

You will have received, long ago, letters by which you will perceive that we want books—more and oftener. It is of vital importance that we should feed our poor yellow Indian minds with constant amusement so I wish, dear, you would take upon yourself to send off a box of the newest publications once in two months, and do not let people scratch anything out of your list. The more trash the better. We are essentially trashy by nature, write a good deal of trashiness superinduced by India; so only be liberal of any books—but those that concern India—and we shall not complain. . . .

This morning there came out of the extreme far end of the hold of the 'Catherine,' a box from Rodwell, with a real good satisfactory profusion of books, and we did not expect them, which made it all the pleasanter; and when we all dispersed after luncheon, everybody had at least three volumes, under each arm. Even Captain——, whose studies are few and far between, stepped off with 'Mrs Armitage.' We have read 'Boz' before, but that was one I was most charmed to see. I look upon it as

a book of reference, and it was a great inconvenience not having a copy in the house. The 'Pickwicks' are equally valuable....

Never mind what people tell you about the books you send. The last set that came by the 'A. Robertson' are our chief occupation; now Lady M. Montagu and Mrs Hemans have given one a very pleasant week, and I have not even wished to begin any of the novels. These good supplies of books you have sent us lately have made a material difference in my life. In the number of lonely hours here a want of books is such a misfortune. The very trashy novels of the day we do not care much about, but any by good authors, or those that you have read and liked yourself are very acceptable. I wish you would say more about the 'Pickwicks,' we are all so fond of them. Are we wrong?

We have had that number of 'Humphrey's Clock' in which the Marchioness nurses Swiveller through his illness, and explains to him that, if you 'make believe very much, orange-peel and water is very nice.' I am so fond of that couple. Kit should not have been so particular, I think. I am exceedingly sorry we have not buried Nell yet.

MISS EDEN

(*Passim*—1836 to 1841)

*

First there was (in Tom Rattleton's bungalow), a family Gibbon, properly docked and curtailed, a present from his grandmother; Gilchrist's Grammar; Williamson's *Vade Mecum*, and Taplin's Farriery; the *Tota Kuhanee* (Tales of a Parrot), Mother Glass's Cookery, and a ponderous *tome*, which I at first took for a Family Bible with explanatory notes, but which turned out to be an abridgement of the rules and regulations of the Bengal Army.

¹ BELLEW (1843)

*

The scarcity of books in India was in my time a great evil, and I have often on reflection laughed at the various schemes and contrivances which I used to put in action to get a book into my possession for a little while, and how vastly civil I used to be to any person who could lend me a book.

MRS SHERWOOD (1807)

VIII—DRESS

Beyond pointing out that the extracts in this section are arranged in chronological order, I seem to have nothing to say—except perhaps to echo Anderson's—and every Indian's—astonishment that throughout their long career the Sahibs were never able to adjust their clothing suitably to the conditions of the country. The sight of a Collector in a morning-coat and topper holding a durbar in a shade temperature of a hundred and five has always been a fine testimony to the tenacity of the English notion of correctitude.

The English had not yet (the early seventeenth century) properly adapted their mode of dress to the climate. The costume of the seventeenth century must have been found peculiarly cumbersome and oppressive in tropical climate. Old prints represent Europeans in India with large hose, long waisted, "peasecod-bellied" doublets, and short cloaks or mantles with standing collars. Then there were ruffs, which Stubbs says were "of twelve, yea, sixteen lengths a-piece, set three or four times double;" and he adds, that the ladies had a "liquid matter, which they call starch, wherein the devil hath learned them to wash and dive their ruffs, which being dry will then stand stiff and inflexible about their necks." Breeches, too, were worn by gentlemen, extravagantly large; and their conical-crowned hats were of velvet, taffata, or sarcenet, ornamented with great bunches of feathers. Probably, however, this dress approved itself to native taste better than ours; at least, Fryer, when at Junar, flattered himself that Nizam Beg, the Governor of the fort, admired both *the splendour* and novelty of his costume. Sir Thomas Roe and his suite, as we are informed, were all clothed in English dresses, only made as light and cool as possible; his attendants wore liveries of "red taffata cloaks, guarded with green taffata," and the chaplain always appeared in a long black cassock.

ANDERSON

*

Every man early in the century, as you may see from their portraits, had a clean-shaven face until you come down to Sir Charles Napier in 1843, "the bearded vision of Sind." Malcolm wore a queue until he was thirty, when he abandoned it for ever. This was in 1799.

JAMES DOUGLAS

*

I must close my letter; but as a matter of curiosity shall just mention the astonishing celerity of the Indian tailors.—Yesterday evening Mr Fay, not being *overstocked* with clothes to appear in, ordered a complete suit of black silk, with waistcoat sleeves, which they brought home *before nine* this morning, very neatly made though the whole must have been done by candle-light. . . .

The ladies here are very fashionable I assure you: I found several novelties in dress since I quitted England, which a good deal surprised me, as I had no idea that fashions travelled so fast.

MRS FAY (1780)

*

"I hear nothing talked of but *the fashions!* It is reckoned the height of indelicacy to show the ear or any part of it; the hair is therefore cut in such a manner as wholly to cover that part of the head, not even the tip must be seen."

*Letter from Mrs Garrow to Mrs Hickey,
Madras, 31st July, 1783*

*

Stays

Ladies' stays, for the warm season, made by Stephen Quick, No. 161, Cossitollah. They are perfectly cool, being both outside and lining of fine Irish Linen, and upon so easy a construction that a servant may with ease shift the bones from one pair

to another in a few minutes, so that a lady having three or four pairs may shift her stays as often as her linen.

N.B.—Price one gold mohur each pair.

Calcutta Gazette, 27th May, 1790



Patent Head Dresses

William Smith (from Ross's Emporium of Fashion) Ladies Hair Dresser and Manufacturer of all kinds of Ornamental Hair.

Most respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of this Settlement that he has now received a very large and elegant assortment of all kinds of Ornamental Hair from Ross's and from Beaumont's, the two first Houses for fashion in London. The Lady's Crop Head Dresses, being a fac-simile of the growing hair, very convenient for Ladies residing in the Country, with the addition of a Bandeau of Hair, will, without trouble, make a complete full dress. A regular assortment is now ready for inspection, with a variety of Full dress and Half dress Head Dresses, Bandeaux, Borders, Hair Caps, Ringlets, Wreaths, etc., Gentlemen's Perruques, correct imitations of nature, and for convenience, appearance, and exactness in fitting, warranted as complete as can be made. Ladies and Gentlemen's hair cut in a New and Superior Style and Fashion.

Calcutta Gazette, 21st November, 1809



Ladies' Beaver, Straw and Chip Hats

William Bell has opened this morning an entire Invoice of Regency and other fashionable Beaver Hats, with Chip and Straw, of the most fashionable shapes.

Calcutta Gazette, March, 1812



Female Fashions for January

Evening Dress.—A round dress composed of white figured lace ... over a white satin slip. The skirt is elegantly ornamented with lace draperies, which are headed by a trimming composed of white satin intermixed with pearls. . . . The body is tight to the shape; it is cut a very decorous height round the bust; the front is in the Grecian style, with a little point in the centre of the bosom; it is ornamented by a tucker *a Venfant*, and that is headed by a rouleau of lace twisted with pearl. The sleeve is extremely novel and elegant; it is composed of the same material as the dress, intermixed with white satin and pearl. The hair is dressed in light loose curls in front; the forehead is very little exposed. Head-dress, pearl ornaments, and a superb plume of feathers, one of which droops a little to the right side. Necklace and Earrings, pearls. White silk shoes, with white kid gloves.

Calcutta Gazette, 1st June, 1820

*French Millinery', Perfumery, etc, etc.*

Mrs Balmanno has the honor to inform the Ladies, that she has just received, direct from Paris, French Perfumery as follows: Eau des Rosieres, Extracts of Do'dem, Cendrellon in Canton, Buishe's a L'Mery, Ispahan Water, and Opiat in Porcelain and a small supply of *Smyth and Nephew's Perfumery*. Mrs B. has also received fashionable Morning, Evening and Dinner Dresses, Gauze Gown Pieces, Bobbin Nett Ditto, Handkerchief, Sattin Lutestring, Ribbons . . . Straw Hats, Flowers, and Flower Trimming for Dresses, Feathers, French Shoes, Crape, Nett for Dresses, Veils, Blond and Thread Laces, Stockings, Gloves, spangled with plain Fans, Corsetts and Stay-Laces.

Calcutta Gazette, 24th August, 1820

(Mrs. Balmanno seems to have been better versed in French perfumes than in the French language. Or was it the local type-setter?)

The fashions (at Karnaul) are even again behind those of Delhi. Mrs V. appeared in a turban made I think of stamped tin moulded into two fans, from which descended a long *pleureuse* feather floating over some very full sleeves. Mrs Z. did not aspire to anything fanciful, but was simply attired in a plain coloured gown made of a very few yards of sarcenet.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

The merchants and planters of Bengal are as various as . . . the same classes in any other part of the world. The latter may generally be known by their diligent eschewing of the black European hat, and the extraordinary substitutes which they use for it. Of these substitutes, some resemble copper boilers in shape, with broad brims, and innumerable air-holes; others have a peak in front, and an apron behind, just (as far as shape is concerned) as if a child's pinafore had been tied upon a dragoon's helmet to cover the back of the neck; others rise in the most outrageous manner—cauldron-fashion—as if the unfortunate individual's head had been introduced by mistake into a wooden washing-basin, and had become fixed there; whilst not a few recall to one's mind the helmet of Mambrino, in Don Quixote.

KNIGHTON (1855)

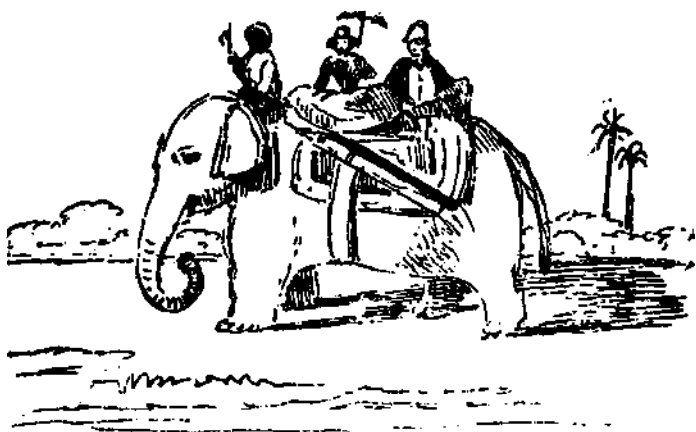
And here is a sad little pendant—once more belonging to all ages and all societies,

John Clease, Tailor

Late of Calcutta, but at present obliged to reside at Serampore on account of his* not being able to satisfy his creditors. As his demands on gentlemen who reside in Bengal. . . are sufficient to extricate him from his difficulties, could he be so successful as to collect them, he therefore takes this public method to solicit their giving orders on their Agents in Calcutta to take up their Bills, having used every private means in his power to induce them to do it, but is sorry to say without effect; and is constrained **further** to mention, though reluctantly, which nothing **but** his distressed situation could induce **him** to do, **that** there are **several**

gentlemen to whom he has enclosed and delivered their Bills, but they have been so very ungentleel as to detain them and not remitted their amounts. He therefore hopes their liberality will induce them, notwithstanding so long since, to remit the amount of their Bills, otherwise he will be obliged to have recourse to such means as will be very disagreeable.

Calcutta Gazette, 13th February, 1794



IX—THE CHILDREN

The subject of The Children in India is inseparable from that of Servants—to which we shall come next; this is because cheaterly and dangerous dirt can be borne—and even laughed over—so long as they affect only Papa and Mama; but when Baby's life is at stake it becomes another story. It is one of the paradoxes of the East that while the European infant has nowhere to face so many potential assassins, it will nowhere encounter such devoted service, such interminable patience or so many diverting playmates. This section must be again mainly the Memsahib's, for the great problems arising out of The Children are hers. They are (a) shall I trust the servants or must I give up everything else and devote every instant of my life to watching over my child? and (b) shall I go home with the children or stay in India with my husband; I seem bound to lose one or the other whatever I do ; which shall it be? The Children in India can be very tiresome (where can they not?) and they give rise to many difficulties and the best course may seem to be to get rid of them; I sat next a woman once at a state dinner who was sending her two children home to boarding school; they were seven and five—and I do not think she was actuated (as she said she was) by considerations of their welfare. Yet The Children have their uses too—if only as a distraction from what is worse ; I passed, one Christmas afternoon, through an Indian city which was thought to be on the verge of a serious anti-European outbreak, and all the Europeans were at the Club entertaining The Children to a Christmas tree; so that those who would otherwise have been sitting at home biting their nails in apprehension were devoting all their energies to persuading their offspring of the existence of Santa Claus. Yes, The Children are a Debit and Credit affair, a Pro-and-Con, a Yes-and-No.

"Sleep make, baby,
Sleep make:
Sleep, little baby
Sleep, oh! oh!
Golden is thy bed,
Of silk are thy curtains,

From Cabul the Mogul woman comes
To make my master sleep."

Ayah's lullaby recorded by Mrs Sherwood (1807)

" Little, little fish,
In bitter, bitter oil,
I will not part with one of them for three pice
and a half."

Ditto, recorded by E. H. Aitken (1889)

*

Louisa Ricketts, at that time (1810) between six and seven, was tall for her age, very brown, and very pale, and had been entirely reared in India. She had been from her earliest infancy accustomed to be attended by a multitude of servants, all of whom she thoroughly despised, as being black (although I would not say that she did not prefer their company to that of her own people). Wherever she had gone during the first five or six years of her life, she had been followed by an ayah, and one or two bearers; she had been perfectly aware that if she got into mischief they would be blamed, not herself. In the meantime, excepting in the article of food, every desire and every caprice and every want had been indulged to satiety. No one who has not seen it can imagine the profusion of toys which are scattered about an Indian house, wherever the Baba Log (or children people), are permitted to range. Fine painted, polished toys from Benares, in which all the household utensils of the country, the fruits, and even the animals are represented (though it must be observed that the imitations of animals made at Benares are ludicrously incorrect); toys in painted clay from Moorshedabad and Calcutta, representing figures of their gods and goddesses with horses, camels, elephants, peacocks, and parrots, and now and then a tope wallah, or "hat wearer," as they call the English, in full regimentals and cocked hat, seated on an ill-formed clumsy thing meant for a horse, Added to these are English, French, and Dutch toys, which generally lie pell-mell - in any corner where the careless listless, toy-saturated child may have thrown or kicked them.

In England even in the highest life, some little attention to

the wearing of their clothes with some propriety and decorum is required. The quantity of garments worn by a little girl would render it extremely fatiguing to change the dress so often in a cold country as our little Indian ladies are required to do. Miss Louisa's attire consisted of a single garment, a frock body without sleeves attached to a pair of trousers, with rather a short, full skirt gathered into the body with the trousers, so as to form one whole. How many times in the day the dress of this little girl was renewed depended much upon the accidents which might happen to it. Four times in the day was the usual arrangement—once before breakfast, once after breakfast, once again before tiffin, and, lastly for the evening airing. Miss Louisa was permitted to move about the house independently of her ayah. She was sometimes in the hall, sometimes in the verandahs, sometimes in one room, sometimes in another. In an Indian house in the hot season no inner door is ever shut; curtains only are hung in the doorways, but to persons who have any sense of decorum these curtains are as strong a barrier as an iron bound door could be. They were none, however, to this little wild one; she was in and out everywhere just as it took her fancy. She had never been taught even her letters, she had never been set down to any task, she was a complete slave of idleness, listlessness, and ennui.

MRS SHERWOOD (1810)

*

Mr T. told me (a story) about the way in which children travel here, and which strikes me as very shocking and would probably strike you more. I believe I have told it to you twice already in hopes of making your motherly hair stand on end. He said a palanquin was brought to his house containing three little children, a little girl nine years old and two smaller brothers. They were going up to Mussoorie, had been travelling three days and had about a week's more journey. They had not even their names written on a piece of paper, or a note to the magistrates of the district, but were just passed on from one set of bearers to the other. You know the bearers are changed every eight miles like so many post horses, and it constantly happens on a dak journey that the bearers get tired, or the fresh set are not at their posts, and the palanquin is put down on the road and the

traveller left to help himself. The bearers who brought these children were tired, and so they had brought them to an European house for a rest. Mr T. had them washed and dressed, and **fed** them and kept them for half a day, when he was obliged **to send** them away for fear they should lose their dâk. He said they were very shy, and would hardly speak, but he made out their names and gave them notes to other magistrates, and some months afterwards he saw them at school at Mussoorie; but it is an odd way of sending children to school.

MISS EDEN (185--)

*

We have some stables half-way, where there is a house given as a sort of retreat to some half-pay sergeant. Sergeant Taylor comes out to assist at the change of our horses; and he has a frightful little half-caste girl, who also goes pottering about telling the syces what to do. I took her a frock and a sash last night, and never saw anybody so pleased, or so ugly. The half-castes dress in such an odd way. I shall be curious to see the frock made up next time.

MISS EDEN (1840)

*

The married (Nicolls) daughter from Madras arrived last week with the first grand-child. Such a hideous little baby—but they are all in such ecstasies with it. I went there this morning and found our Miss Nicolls with the thermometer at 1000, I believe, walking up and down the room with the baby, away from the punkah because they thought it made the child sneeze. The perspiration was streaming down her face, and there was old Sir Jasper in a white jacket snapping his fingers and saying, Bow, wow, wow, and then rushing back to the punkah and saying he really could not stand the heat, but perhaps the baby with her cold had better not venture near the punkah. I believe the child was boiled; it looked like it.

MISS EDEN (1841)

*

Baby is very well and very intelligent. Every now and then she learns to pronounce some new word, which she thinks is very clever; but I intend, as much as possible, to prevent her learning the native languages: though it is rather difficult—most English children do learn them, and all sorts of mischief with them, and grow like little Hindoos. If my child were to stay long in the country, it would be worth while to send for an English nurse; but, as it is, I hope to bring her home before it becomes of any consequence, and meanwhile I keep her as much as possible with me. The native "system" of managing a child is to make it cry for everything. If "Missy," as they call her, asks for anything, Ayah is too lazy to give it, but argues, and tries to persuade her to do without it: then Missy whines—Ayah does not care for that, she whines too: then Missy roars—then, whether right or wrong, good or bad, Ayah gives her whatever she wants. She has nothing to do but to roar long enough, and she is sure to get her own way—anything may be done by means of naughtiness.

Letters from Madras (1839)



The wages for a day, or wet-nurse, to a European child in India are what these people think very large, and a present of

forty or fifty rupees is always given when the baby is weaned. The daye also is provided with clothes and food, and many presents are made to her. When the child cuts a tooth she always has a rupee. When the infant first steps alone, or performs any other feat equally wonderful, she claims a backsheesh, and is very cross if she does not receive one. . . .

When Ameena had been with us some time, I had a great shock. Being in my dressing-room next the nursery, I heard my baby give a sharp cry. In a moment I was near him, and I felt certain that his nurse had crammed something into his mouth. I charged her with it, but both she and the ayah denied it. I was not satisfied. I watched my boy carefully; in a very little while he fell into a deep sleep. I still watched, I had fearful suspicions. The sleep became heavier and heavier. His extremities became cold. I sent for the medical man, and he soon discovered that the baby had been drugged with opium. I cannot say what means were used by the surgeon, but the baby lay like death for many hours, above twelve; he then revived gradually, but assuredly this was not the first time he had been so quieted. After this, of course, we could have no confidence in his nurse, and we changed her for a black woman for whom we had taken a fancy.

It is my firm belief that half the European children who die in infancy in India, die from the habit which their nurses have of giving them opium.

MRS SHERWOOD (1807)

*

My room was very large, and there was a bed placed at a distance from mine for the nurse. When she had laid me in bed, with the baby, on the Christmas night, she went to partake of the good things which were going, and Betty Parker took her turn to attend to me till the company left the house. The nurse came back, took the infant, and went to the couch prepared for her. I soon fell asleep, but woke again soon after hearing the child cry. I looked out from my bed and saw the woman sitting up on the couch, having taken up a round pillow of the couch, which she was holding like an infant, rocking backwards and forwards and hushing it, whilst the baby was crying by her side. She was fearfully intoxicated, and I dared not call to

her lest I should wake her from her drunken trance, and she should hurt the child. There are no bells to ring in India; there was no one I could call. I was desperate! I looked by the bedside for a pair of shoes or slippers—there was no such thing. Out of bed I got, with bare feet, went over to the couch, took up my baby, the woman being too drunk to be aware of what I was doing, and got back to bed with my boy, leaving the wretched creature to sing her lullaby to her pillow.

MRS SHERWOOD

(This child was Little Henry of "Little Henry and his Bearer" ; the incident took place on Christmas Day 1805. The child died, at eighteen months, in 1807.)

*

Facing the cenotaph of Jemial Shah, and resembling it in form, is an enclosed tomb called the "Datar Chelah," surmounted by a richly gilt ornament, and flanked by an exquisitely wrought musjid. Surprised that the worshipping crowd paid it no homage, and that neither the odours of frankincense, nor the glare of torches, marked it as a venerated spot, I advanced to the steps, and over the richly chiselled entrance, observed a black marble tablet, inscribed as " Sacred to the memory of Joseph Dykes, infant son of Major N. D. Ballantine." The tomb, and musjid, are expensive, ornate, and singular monuments of the ostentatious, and peculiar feeling of a European father, selecting this mode of conciliating native opinion. For twelve years, an allowance of two rupees a month is said to have been made, for flowers, oil, and frankincense; and during this period the tomb of Colonel Ballantine's son shared consideration with the cenotaph of the saint, but both largess and worship have since been discontinued.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

*

In the evening Baby will go out for an airing with the Bearer and Ayah, and while they dawdle along the dusty road, or sit on kerb-stones and on culvert parapets, he will listen to the extensile

tale of their simple sorrows. He will hear, with a sigh, that the profits of petty larceny are declining; he will be taught to regret the increasing infirmities of his Papa's temper; and portraits in sepia of his Mamma will be observed by him to excite laughter mingled with dark impulsive words. Thus there will pass into Baby's eyes glances of suspicious questionings, "the blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised."



In the long summer days Baby will patter listlessly about the darkened rooms accompanied by his suite, who carry a feeding bottle—Maw's Patent Feeding Bottle—just as the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the mace; and, from time to time, little Mister Speaker will squat down on his dear little hams and take a refreshing pull or two. At breakfast and luncheon time little Mister Speaker will straggle into the dining-room, and fond parents will give him a tid-bit of many soft dainties, to be washed

down with brandy and water, beer, sherry, or other alcoholic draught. On such broken meals Baby is raised.

Twenty-One Days in India (1895)

*

Yesterday I saw a pathetic sight. A couple in a *tikka-gharry* ;* the man a soldier, a Gordon Highlander, and on the front seat a tiny coffin. The man's arm was round the woman's shoulder and she was crying bitterly. A bit of shabby crape was tied round her hat and she carried a sad little wreath.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

(* *The cheapest form of hired carriage.*)

X—SERVANTS

The feature of this aspect of our study which immediately strikes one is its constancy; the outcries of Mackrabie or Mrs Fay in 1780 differ but little from those of "The Civilian" or Mrs J. M. Graham nigh on a hundred and fifty years later. If ever there was an illustration of the Unchanging East, it is the Oriental Servant. And he is typical of the East in another way by providing yet another paradox. "How bad they are !" "How good!" "Would we were quit of them!" "What should we do without them!" So have ten successive generations of Masters and Missuses spoken and written.*

In one respect however the Sahib's household has changed—for better or for worse according to taste; its numbers. In a photograph of my own domestic staff taken about 1914 / can count ten—omitting two Government peons who were not really my servants at all. But in the more spacious days on either side of the year 1800 this would have been considered a very poor show. The Lady of the "Madras Letters"—who lived up-country and in no special magnificence—had twenty-seven ; and the busy Mrs Parkes, far outdoing her, gives a list of fifty-seven as suitable for a "private family" and including dhobi, darzi, cowherd, shepherd, poultryman and two carpenters. This cost her (or her husband) Rs. 290 a month; but "we> as quiet people" (my italics) "find these servants necessary." And here is the list of Hickey (who was not a quiet person) totalling sixty-three ; on his final departure from India he gave three months wages to each of these, which set him back no less than two thousand sicca rupees:—

1 Consumah	1 Tailor
1 Butler	2 Durwans
8 Kitmutdars	2 Washermen
1 Hairdresser	1 Tinner
2 Aubdars	2 Maters
1 Comprador	1 Dooreea
2 Bakers	4 Sices
2 Cooks	3 Grasscutters
9 Bearers	1 Coachman

5 Hircarrahs	2 Beestees
3 Mussaulgees	5 Servants of Golaub and Tippee
4 Maullays	

63

Let the inordinate numbers of Indian servants, therefore, be the theme of our first extracts.

"One hundred and 10 servants to wait upon a Family of 4 People. Oh monstrous! and yet we are Oeconomists. . . . The domestic cares in this country to the person who thinks it in the least degree essential to his welfare that bills should be examined before they are paid, and that servants who are born and bred rogues should cheat within some degree of moderation, will find full employment for his faculties. To superintend this tribe of devils and their several departments we have a numerous collection of banyans (clerks), chief and subordinate, . . . who fill a large room, and are constantly employed in controlling or rather conniving at each others accounts. We are cheated in every article both within and without doors."

MACKRABIE (1775)

As quoted in Busted

*

It seems to me that I go about asking "Why?" all day and no one gives me a satisfactory answer to anything. Why, for example, should we require a troop of servants living, as we do, in a kind of hotel? And yet there they are—Boggley's bearer and my *ayah*—I can see some reason for their presence—a *kitmutgar* to wait on us at table and bring tea in the afternoon, another young assistant *kitmutgar* who scurries like a frightened rabbit at my approach, a delightful small boy who rejoices in the name of *paniwallah*, whose sole duty is to carry water for the baths, the *dhohi* who washes our clothes by beating them between two large—and I should say, judging by the state of the clothes, sharp—stones, losing most of them in the process, and a *syce* or groom for each pony. Seated as one sometimes sees them, in rows on the steps, augmented by a *chuprassi* or two, brilliant in uniform, they make a sufficiently imposing spectacle. I have few

words, but I look at them in as pleasant a way as I know how, partly because I like to be friends with servants, and partly because I'm rather afraid of them and don't want to rouse them to Mutiny or do anything desperate, but Boggley discouraged me at the outset. "You needn't grin at them so affably," **he** remarked, "they will only think you are weak in the head."

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

*

Every horse has a man and a maid to himself—the maid cuts grass for him; and every dog has a boy. I inquired whether the cat had any servants, but I found that she was allowed to wait upon herself; and, as she seemed the only person in the establishment capable of so doing, I respected her accordingly.

Notwithstanding their numbers, they are dreadfully slow. I often tire myself with doing things for myself rather than wait for their dawdling; but Mrs Staunton laughs at me, and calls me a "griffin," and says I must learn to have patience and save my strength. (N.B. *Griffin* means a freshman or freshwoman in India.) The real Indian ladies lie on a sofa, and, if they drop their handkerchief, they just lower their voices and say, "Boy!" in a very gentle tone, and then creeps in, perhaps, some old wizen, skinny brownie, looking like a superannuated thread-paper, who twiddles after them for a little while, and then creeps out again as softly as a black cat, and sits down cross-legged in the verandah till "Mistress please to call again."

Letters from Madras (1836)

*

I wish you could see my passage sometimes. The other day when I set off to pay George a visit I could not help thinking how strange it would have seemed at home. It was a rainy day, so all the servants were at home. The two tailors were sitting in one window, making a new gown for me, and Rosina by them chopping up her betel-nut; at the opposite window were my **two**, Dacca embroiderers working at a large frame, and the sentry, in an ecstasy of admiration, mounting guard over them. **There** was **the** bearer standing upright, in a sweet sleep, pulling **away**

at my punkah. My own five servants were sitting in a circle, with an English spelling book, which they were learning by heart; and my jemadar, who, out of compliment to me, has taken to draw, was sketching a bird. Chance's (Miss Eden's dog) servant was waiting at the end of the passage for his 'little excellency*' to go out walking, and a Chinese was waiting with some rolls of satin that he had brought to show.

MISS EDEN (1836)

Before he had servants—this is a thing one is apt to forget—the Sahib had slaves ; as in all slavery countries there were good masters and bad, and there were types who carried on their more brutal practices after slavery had ceased to exist. Between Waterloo and the Mutiny there was a good deal of solemn discussion as to how far a "European" was entitled to beat an Indian—any Indian—for anything; and especially how far it was permissible, and indeed advisable, to beat one's domestic staff for next to nothing. Many, to their honour, thought it certainly not advisable and barely in fact permissible; yet there were many humane and generous individuals who would have viewed a scene such as Russell describes below without turning a hair; and certainly the first Magistrate who fined a "European" for knocking about his syce or his chokra was a man of considerable moral courage.

I was very much shocked to see in this courtyard, two native servants, covered with plaisters and bandages, and bloody, who were lying on their charpoys, moaning. On inquiring, my friend was informed by one of the guests, they were So-and-so's servants, who had just been "licked" by him. It is a savage, beastly, and degrading custom. I have heard it defended; but no man of feeling, education or goodness of heart can vindicate or practise it. . . . The master who had administered his "spirit-ing" so gently to his delinquent domestics, sat sulky and sullen, and, I hope, ashamed of his violence, at the table; but he had no fear of any pains or penalties of the law.

RUSSELL (1857)

Before leaving the subject of servants, a further insight under this head into the customs of the last (i.e. the eighteenth) century, may be got by referring to the summary mode in which the police

dealt with this class (and others) when brought up as offenders. This will be fairly exemplified by a few ordinary extracts from the charge sheet of the Superintendent of Police in 1778 (in Calcutta)
C. S. Playdell

"John Ringwell, against his cook named Rumjaney, for running away from him and beating another servant who had been engaged in his place. It appears that he had one of his ears cut off for some offence. The present complaint being fully proved—ordered he receive ten rattans and be dismissed.

"A slave girl of Mr Anderson, Piggy, having again run away from her master—ordered her five rattans and be sent to her master.

"Captain Scott complains against Banybub for not complying with his promise to repair his carriage. Ordered ten slippers.

"Col. Watson against Ramsing, as an impostor receiving pay as a carpenter when actually nothing more than a barber. Ordered fifteen rattans, and to be drummed through the Cooly Bazaar to Col. Watson's gates.

"Mr Nottley against Calloo for putting a split bamboo and laying there in wait purposely to throw passengers down and apparently to rob them. Ten rattans.

"Mr Cantwell against his Matraney for stealing empty bottles. This she has practised some time, and constantly sold them to a shopkeeper Bucktaram, which he himself confesses. To deter others from following so pernicious an example,—ordered Bucktaram twenty rattans, the Matraney ten rattans, and both to be carried in a cart round the town, and their crime published by beat of tom-tom."

BUSTEED

Yet of course there is the other side to the picture; loyalty in the servant—sometimes, as in the Mutiny days, unto death; kindness in the master; real affection in both.

I was much amused at a meeting between Mrs Rumley and her old Madras bearer, a respectable-looking man, who had come on board with the debashes.

"Eh! Eh! Ram Cookoo! Ram Cookoo!" was her cry the moment she saw him, whilst his eyes kindled with joy at the unexpected meeting, and long, and probably very interesting, was the conversation which followed, though I could catch no other sounds than "Oh, Ram Cookoo! Eh, Ram Cookoo!" often repeated, and spoken in the half-affected, drawling manner in which a young lady in Europe often addresses her favourite beau.

MRS SHERWOOD (1805)

*

Dear J. left us for good this morning. I do not think he cared much for us; but all the old servants, of whom he has had the care for eleven years, went with all their Eastern, devoted-looking ways and took leave of him and quite upset his nerves, and he went off in a shocking state. After taking leave of F. he quite broke down in G.'s room, and could not come to mine; and my jemadar came in with large tears running down: 'Major Sahib so unhappy. He say he not able to speak to ladyship—he cry very much!' I asked if they were all sorry he was going. 'Yes, very. He very old gentleman at Government House, and know everything, and very just.' And then, to wind it up with a fine piece of language, 'he *adapt* properly well to all lordship's poor servants.'

MISS EDEN (1838)

If masters were sometimes harsh and brutal, let us admit that they had provocation. The meticulous roguery of the Indian servant—is it innate; is it something germane to the country and irremediable as the climate; is it a form of shikar; a point of honour; or is it just the Devil? At all events it has been a timeless and unaltering feature of life in India—and will doubtless remain so in the Dominions, however many, into which she may divide and among the Sahibs, however few, who may survive.

"Thursday, 16th November, 1693. Having been informed that Mr Edward King late Steward, had made a bargain with John the Butcher for 50 Pagodas monthly during his Stewardship, which is justly suspected to be the reason why the Butcher's meat in his time is charged in his account so much dearer than by the present Steward, to the great increase of the charges of the General Table. The Attorney General is therefore ordered to take the examination of the Steward's servants then employed, and to report the same on Thursday next."

On the Thursday following the Attorney delivered in his report on this important affair, in which the evidence of one Summoodro, a Conicopoly, forms a story which may find its parallel in every European's household in Madras.

"Summoodro declares that in February last John Arts alias John the Butcher told this deponent that he had given Mr King 20 Pagodas; that in March he gave him 30 Pagodas; then in April, May and June this deponent knows Mr King received 50 Pagodas each month, which was thus: when John asked for 200 Pagodas at a time, Mr King paid him but 150 Pagodas, and took receipt for 200 Pagodas; when the month was almost expired and John brought in 200 Pagodas worth of provisions, they then cleared their accounts."

TALBOYS WHEELER

*

Calcutta 29th August (1780) I am happy to say our house is a very comfortable one, but we are surrounded by a set of thieves. ... I will give you an instance or two of their conduct. ... My Khansaman (or house steward) brought in a charge of a gallon of milk and thirteen eggs, for making scarcely a pint and a half of custard; this was so barefaced a cheat, that I refused to allow it, on which he gave me warning. ... At first he used to charge me with twelve ounces of butter a day, for each person; now he grants that the consumption is only four ounces. ... It seems my comprodore (or market man) is gone away: he says poor servants have no profit by staying with *me*; at other gentlemen's houses he always made a rupee a day at least 1 besides his wages; but here if he only charges an anna or two more, it is sure to be taken off. ... I find I was imposed on,

in taking a comprodore at all; the Khansaman ought to do that business. Judge whether I have not sufficient employment among these harpies ?

MRS FAY

(Mrs Fay, like so many of her successors, tried sacking the "Khansaman" but was obliged', like so many of her successors, to take him back: she got no better and "the devil I know" etc)

Lastly, a few words on some servants in particular.

The chokra does part of the butler's work—the part that cannot be left undone, and only as much of that as he is compelled to do. He too wears a white coat, and adds to his poor importance a pair of white trousers. His head, like the others, is mercifully covered. There are two classes of chokras—fools and knaves. I infinitely prefer the latter; they have ability, and in times of need they put any ordinary English cook-general into the shade. . . .

The cook's place is in the kitchen, and it's far better he should stay there. He is a marvellously economical person, neither time nor soap is wasted in the cleansing of his person or his implements. He sleeps, eats and works in the same garment. The care he takes of every scrap of food is unfailing; no more than is strictly necessary is sent to the dining-room, and all the tastiest scraps are put to the best possible use in kitchen, devoted to a good cause as it were, for the more the butler bulges the more he beautifies the bungalow.

I once had a clean cook, but he went off his head. The only cooks who come up to the jungle are those whose reputations are past praying for, and whose air of innocence has ceased to deceive even the unsuspecting. Hill air never agrees with them for long, it's too pure, and they soon become home-sick for the evil-smelling bazaars of their own villages. They all drink, some little, some much, it depends on opportunity; but they are clever—some in cooking, some in stealing, and some in concealing what they don't know.

The range in my bungalow kitchen was very elementary; it consisted of a mound of earth and clay, a hole was scooped out

to put the fire in and another hole did duty as an oven, but I have dined thirty guests at a time.

The ayah is a person of great importance and holds a high social position in the kitchen, provided she is wise enough to take service with the young and inexperienced mother of a first baby. She is an appreciative recipient of all sorts of cast-off garments from garters to ball-gowns. She is an inexhaustible and trustworthy source of much scandal. She attires herself in white when on duty, but I have seen her blazon forth in scarlet and purple cloths edged with gold. She is very clean, but performs her ablutions at odd times. I walked into the nursery bathroom at n a.m. one day, and found ayah's ample proportions sans raiment squatting on the floor, while she threw cupfulls of water over herself at intervals. She greeted me with a bright and friendly smile—"Little master sleeping 'm." I retired in confusion, which was born either of decent self-respect, or of a false shame generated by civilisation. She left me three times to bury one who had never lived, and each time tucked some of my possessions into her luggage. One, packed insecurely in her draperies, fell out at my feet; neither of us evinced the very least surprise, so complete was the understanding between us.

J. M. GRAHAM (1914)

*

In the long languors of an Indian summer's day the bravest Englishwomen succumb to noonday slumbers, tempered by a *soupgon* of novel-reading, and the more frivolous forms of needle-work. All but the primary garment is removed, closed Venetians moderate the glare, and broad punkah waves slowly over the recumbent figure on the snowy couch. In this cool temple of downy sleep and rustling toilette the Ayah is a priestess. She steals silently about on bare feet. She has quick and ready hands to fold, to arrange, to pilfer; she has quick eyes to read her mistress's mood, and to know when it is safe to launch on a moving tale, to beg for an advance of pay, or to communicate the gossip of the day that has percolated through the servants of the neighbouring bungalow. She will kneel down and shampoo the lazy little upturned feet on the bed before her; and she will murmur over them some plaintive Indian air, till the whole atmosphere

is laden with honeyed drowsiness; till a flood of dim dreams overbears the shores of severe reality; till stone walls, wooden furniture, and sweet warm flesh melt away, and the soul is laid bare in the restoring death of life.

Twenty-One Days in India (1899)

*

And here a few words as to the relation between the Anglo-Indian mistress and her ayah may not be out of place. With this particular type of Eastern woman-hood (not the highest, by any means) every Englishwoman in India is constrained to have dealings; and it is hers to see that those dealings are such as shall not tarnish the honour of her nationality or her sex. To this end she should never forget that the woman from whom little of her social and domestic life is hid, judges her conduct by Eastern standards, and communicates those judgements without reserve to an admiring circle of listeners over her evening hookah. For the ayah is a bone-bred gossip; her tongue is a stranger to the golden fetter of truth; and without risk of serious mistatement, it may almost be said that the unscrupulous chattering of her and her kind has done more to darken understanding and confirm countless misconceptions than any of the ways and works of Englishwomen themselves. It may be only a very little in each case, but "drops of water falling, falling, brim the *chattie* o'er," and behold the harm is done, and Anglo-Indians must accept and suffer from the results.

MAUD DIVER (1909)

*

What if the impress of those swarthy lips on that fair cheek (the European child's) are but an outward symbol of impressions on a mind still as fair and pure, impressions which soap and water will not purge away? Yes, it is so. The *Ayah* hangs like a black cloud over and around the infant mind, and its earliest outlooks on the world are tinted by that medium. . . . Under the same guidance it will, as it grows older, tread paths of knowledge which its parents never trod. Whither will they lead it? We know not who never joined in the familiar chat of *Ayachs* and

servants, but imagination "bodies forth the forms of things unseen" and shudders. Let us rejoice that a merciful superstition, which regards the climate of India as deadly to European children, will step in and save the little soul. The climate would do it no harm, but there is a moral miasma more baneful than any which rises from the pestilential swamps of the Terai, or the Bombay Flats.

P.S.—I have just taken another look at our present *Ayah*. She is a little old woman from Goa, with humorous "crow's feet" at the corners of her kind eyes. She is very retiring and modest, and all the servants seem fond of her. It is evident that nature is various, and we cannot all be types.

E. H. AITKEN (1907)

*

There are plenty of dhobies in the low country, and in consequence the advantages of competition are there also; but the great trouble always is to get one's clothes sent home. The dhoby's house is an emporium for the hire of wedding garments and grave clothes, and quite a wide choice can be found amongst so many.

One can fancy quite a lot about these kinds of things. I remember meeting a corpse in Madras; it sat up in an ordinary arm-chair, and as it was carried past it nodded upon the just and unjust alike, as is the way with royalty. It wore a white frilly garment which seemed familiar. The procession swept past with its flowers and its discordancies, garish and dreadful.

I reached the hotel two hours later; on my bed lay all the washing just back from the dhoby. On the top of the pile was a frilly nightdress, slightly but significantly crumpled. The faint stale fragrance of some heavy perfume was about me, and I feared I knew not what. Arrant foolishness! No doubt ayah had dropped the linen and tried to refold it with clumsy fingers and poor success; but where had I met that clinging, nauseating scent before?

"Pure imagination," said my husband, puffing away at a rare cigar.

With gloved hands I lifted the uncanny garment from off my bed, and a small white funeral flower fell out. I can see it now

lying on the rush matting, a pure waxy blossom emitting a sweet and dreadful perfume.

J. M. GRAHAM (1914)



XI—RACIAL RELATIONS

Such were the English at their first appearance on the Western Coast of India. It must be confessed that the natives had before them a strange variety of models from which to form in their minds the character of an Englishman. Roe and Herbert, the acute diplomatist and the polished gentleman; Best, Downton, and other valiant mariners; the inquiring and literary Kerridge; hard-headed, ungrammatical and religious Joseph Salbank; wine-bibbing Rastell; Mildenhall, cheat and assassin; preachers or gossellers half Anglican and half Zuinglian; orthodox chaplains; a few scampish reckless travellers; and piratical merciless captains—such a medley could scarcely leave any well-defined impressions upon the native mind. Probably opinions were decided by circumstances. The jovial Jehangeer found that an Englishman was a well-trained courtier and good boon-companion; the bunyas of Surat found that he was a clever tradesman, and a hard driver of a bargain. But doubtless at first the popular feeling was one of fear, afterwards of contempt. Hindoos and Mussulmans considered the English a set of cow-eaters and fire-drinkers, vile brutes, fiercer than the mastiffs which they brought with them, who would fight like Eblis, cheat their own fathers, and exchange with the same readiness a broadside of shot and thrusts of boarding-pikes, or a bale of goods and a bag of rupees.

ANDERSON

On one occasion I asked an officer who knew something of the natives, what they thought of us, as far as he knew, when we gave way to such exceeding high spirits and were in full swing, singing and drinking.

"What do you suppose those fellows who are standing there behind our chairs are thinking of all this?"

"*They?* Why, they don't think anything about us at all. They look upon us as out-of-the-way inscrutable beings, whom it would be quite useless to perplex their heads about, and they're too well accustomed to this sort of thing to wonder at it."

RUSSELL (1855)

i have placed these two extracts first in this section because, in some sense, the one is a reply to the other. It is possible to retort to Anderson that the "natives" thought nothing of the kind, nor were capable of thinking it; that, if they allowed their minds to dwell upon such a speculation at all, they regarded the English as creatures wholly exotic and almost non-human, whose antics were as capricious and unpredictable as those of the monkeys in the local banyan-tree. Had the British intruders been so obviously undesirable as the darker pictures would suggest, it seems likely that the cry of "Quit India" would have been raised at an earlier date and more effectively. But it was not so raised—or not always.



Translation of the Persian Address from the Inhabitants of Dhuboy to the English Collector on the morning of his final departure.

". . . Dhuboy, famed among the cities of the east, was happy when this English sirdar presided in her durbār; his disposition towards the inhabitants was with the best consideration. . . . All castes who looked up to him obtained redress, without distinction and without price. When he took the poor by the hand he made him rich: under his protection the people were happy, and

reposed on the bed of ease. When he superintended the garden, each gardener performed his duty; and all the trees in the garden flourished. So equal was his justice, that the tiger and the kid might drink at the same fountain; and often did he redeem the kid from the tiger's mouth. . . . In this country we have not known any government so upright as that of the English;—Alas! if our protector forsakes us we shall be disconsolate as a widow: we shall mourn the loss of a father and weep as for the death of a mother!—ALLA! in thy mercy continue him to us!"

FORBES (1783)

(The "English Collector" was Forbes himself who tells us that the Translation as printed "is divested of some lofty metaphors and hyperbolical compliments, which, though well-intended, were too flattering for the performance of official duty, and any sincere endeavours to render them happy")

*

In addition to a service of plate, a picture, and a statue voted at a meeting of the European inhabitants, the compliment most congenial to Mr Elphinstone (retiring Governor of Bombay) must have been that which he received from the natives within the presidency, of all religious denominations, who subscribed upwards of a lakh of rupees, or 10000/., for one or two professorships in the native college . . . to perpetuate, as they said, to their children's children the memory of one who had been to them a friend and a father.

MRS LUSHINGTON (1827)

*

What in the name of all that is wonderful are we doing in India at all? What indeed? The Civilian cannot tell you, for he does not know, but he does think we are doing something. He thinks this because of a letter he saw the other day in the papers. It was a letter signed by a number of Indian gentlemen and they asked that their District which had had an Indian Collector for some years past might be given a European Collector for a change. Now, if there is anything in Self-Government for India

at all, an Indian Collector ought to be its finest product, and the raising of Indians to be Collectors should be India's noblest aim. The Civilian is, moreover, competent to state that the Indian Collector in question was a first-class man and an able. But they wanted a European. There you are, and the Civilian leaves you to make of it what you can. He-himself, frankly, is beaten.

The Civilian's South India (1915)

If the attitude of the "native" to the "European" was in the main incurious, this was reciprocated to a degree which must surprise any intelligent person—and has always surprised the more intelligent visitors to India. How much, I wonder, did the type of English lady portrayed below lose us in India? She was still there—in force—in 1947.

It is wonderful how little interested most of the English ladies seem by all the strange habits and ways of the natives; and it is not merely that they have grown used to it all, but that, by their own accounts, they never cared more about what goes on around them than they do now. I can only suppose they have forgotten their first impressions. But this makes me wish to try and see everything that I can while the bloom of my Orientalism is fresh upon me, and before this apathy and listlessness have laid hold on me, as no doubt they will.

I asked one lady what she had seen of the country and the natives since she had been in India. "Oh, nothing!" said she: "thank goodness, I know nothing at all about them, nor I don't wish to: really I think the less one sees and knows of them the better!"

Letters from Madras (1837)

We have already noticed that the institution of slavery still flourished in the age of the Nabobs. Here are some curious sidelights.

Slave Boys run away

On the fifteenth of October last. Two slave boys (with the letters V. D. marked on each of their right arms, above the elbow,

named Sam and Tom, about eleven years of age, and exactly of a size) run away, with a great quantity of plate, etc. etc. This is to request, if they offer their service to any Gentlemen, they will be so kind as to examine their arms, keep them confined, and inform the owner. A reward of one hundred Sicca Rupees will be given to any black man, to apprehend and deliver them up.

J. H. Valentin Dubois, lieutenant.
Calcutta Gazette, 2nd December, 1784

*

"The humble petition of Doctor Thomas.
"Showeth,

" That your petitioner's father-in-law Lewis de Melho in his life time held a converse with one of his slaves named Ignacia near the space of thirty years; living with her in a separate house, and entrusting the greatest part of his estate in her hands, and taking no notice of his wife or daughter. But upon his death bed repenting himself of the ills he had done, he asked pardon of his wife for his ill usage of her; and declared that the said Ignacia had been the cause of it by the power of medicines she had given him, and that he had delivered into her charge 2600 pagodas in money, besides jewels and medicines of value. And he did appoint and constitute his said wife and daughter heiresses to his estate; as appears by a certificate under the hand of the Rev. Padre Paschall Perciva de Cunha. But now so it is, may it please your Honor that the said Ignacia refuses to deliver up or give any account of the said estate; though it can be proved by witnesses that she has divers things of a large value as well as money in her possession. Wherefore your petitioner, in behalf of his mother-in-law Francisca and his wife Isabella, humbly prays that your Honor will oblige the said slave to make a true discovery and surrender of all those things in her possession, belonging to the estate of the deceased Mr Lewis de Melho, that so they may have their right, and he as in duty bound shall ever pray."

*Petition to the Governor; Fort St.
George*, 9th Nov., 1714

*

" In the name of God, Amen, this thirteenth day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand, seven hundred and twelve, I, Thomas Saunders of Bengal, mariner, make this my last Will and Testament, in manner and form following.

"To a slave girl, named Clara, her liberty, with all her jewels and five hundred rupees; and if brought to bed within eight months and a half after my leaving Bengal, being the twenty-third day of January one thousand seven hundred and twelve, I bequeath unto the said child four thousand rupees and to be under the care of my executors. A slave boy named Pompey I give his liberty, and five rupees per month during his life. A slave boy named Anthony, his freedom. If the said child that I bequeathed four thousand rupees dies afore it come to age or married, then the said four thousand rupees shall go to my son John Saunders.

Consultation Book: Fort St. George

Very different from that of the Claras or Ignacias was the position of the Indian woman who became what Hickey tactfully calls an "inmate" of a Nabob's establishment:

I had often admired a lovely Hindostanee girl who sometimes visited Carter at my house, who was very lively and clever. Upon Carter's leaving Bengal I invited her to become an inmate with me, which she consented to do, and from that time to the day of her death Jemdanee, which was her name, lived with me, respected and admired by all my friends by her extraordinary sprightliness and good humour. Unlike the women in general in Asia she never secluded herself from the sight of strangers; on the contrary, she delighted in joining my male parties, cordially joining in the mirth which prevailed, though she never touched wine or spirits of any kind.

HICKEY (1787)

(Jemdanee died in childbirth in 1796. The child, a boy (the " Chuta William sahib" Jemdanee had hoped for) lived till the next year, and then died also—of a fever.)

Here are some miscellaneous comments on Hindu versus Muslim

and on the British services in India, with special reference to the emergence of the "Competition-wallah" after 1858:—

(Editorial note on a news item relating to the "uniform freedom" enjoyed by "the natives" in the "exercise of their religious ceremonies.")

.... Though the Mussulmans dwindle into insignificance, we have nothing to apprehend from the Hindoos. Many have urged the necessity of upholding the influence of Moguls to counterbalance the power of Hindoos; but this should seem bad policy, as we would causelessly become obnoxious, and involve ourselves in the interests of a declining State, who are at the same time our secret enemy and rivals.

Calcutta Gazette, 6th March, 1787

*

"Who is that in the smart gharry, with servants in livery?" "That is the chaplain of the station, who marries, and baptises, and performs service for the Europeans." "Does he go among the natives?" "Not he; he leaves that to the missionaries, of whom there are lots here." . . .

"Well: and who comes next along the drive, in that very smart buggy with the gray mare?" "That is the doctor of the station. He attends the sick Europeans. He also gets, under certain circumstances, head-money for every native soldier in garrison." "Does he attend them?" "I should think not! Why, how on earth could he attend a lot of niggers?" "But why is he paid for them?" "Ah, that is another matter. You must understand our system a little better before you can comprehend things of this sort."

RUSSELL (1857)

*

The Indian service has been a hot-house plant, peculiarly cultivated and matured, and it is to be seen whether the attempt to introduce a more hardy and less refined production in its place will be attended with success. For my part, I cannot



imagine any means of irritating the natives, exciting their aversion towards our rule, and bringing the British name into contempt, more effectual, and certain of success, than introducing among them a large proportion of vulgar, violent, or coarse-minded men, of an inferior class, on the ground that they have acquired a sort of special knowledge for the occasion.

RUSSELL (1857)

*

"It is really of more consequence to the natives that he (the young British officer or official) should be good in the cricket field and on horseback, popular with servants and the poor, and the champion of bullied fags, that he should have a mother who taught him to say his prayers, and sisters who helped her to give him reverence for womankind and respect for weakness, than that he should be first to take a double-first at Oxford."

Sir Battle Frere to Lord Goderich, 1858

*

I could not help thinking as we drove home how harsh the reins of our rule must feel to the soft skin of the natives. . . . Some of the best of our rulers administer justice in their shirt-sleeves (which by the bye are used as a substitute for blotting-paper all over India), cock up their heels in the tribunal, and smoke cheroots to assist them in council; and I have seen one eminent public servant, with his braces hanging at his heels, his bare feet in slippers, and his shirt open at the breast just as he came from his bath, give audience to a great chieftain on a matter of considerable state importance. The natives see that we treat each other far differently, and draw their inferences accordingly.

RUSSELL (1857)

(The gentleman in braces—or his equivalent—was still in dèshabille seventy years later.)

But the "native" has the last word:

Coming home we saw a native cooking his dinner on a little charcoal fire, and as I passed he threw the contents of the pot away. Surprised, I asked why. "Because," I was told, "your shadow fell on it and defiled it!"

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

XII—GLIMPSES OF THE GREAT

As with the section on "Places", no attempt was made here to list the "Great" and search for references to them; but when, in one's reading, a "Great" was suddenly and unexpectedly met with—often in odd circumstances—he or she was logged. This section is merely the result of these chance encounters.

Sivaji

His (*Seva Gi's*) Chief Residence is at *Rairee*, where he bids Defiance to the Emperor, *Gulconda*, *Duccan*, *Portuguese*, and all the World; magnifying himself in his strong-Holds; installed *Mau Rajah* Two Years since: His Mother was then alive, to whom he shewed Filial Obedience: He is married to Four Wives, to whom he keeps religiously, being a strict Observer of his Heathen Rites.

He sways by *Brachmins*; his Soldiers are Haedy Brave Fellows, fit for the Mountains; 30000 Horse is the most he can make, Foot innumerable.

Merchants have little Countenance from Him: Of the Common People he says, *Money is inconvenient for them; give them Victuals and An Arse-Clout, it is enough.*

FRYER (1673)

*

Sir Eyre Coote

"I will not content myself with saying that I never knew, but upon my soul I never heard of so abandoned a scoundrel. It is a character to which your English ideas of dirt and meanness do not reach. Nor is it to be met with even in Bengal; even here it excites execration and contempt."

Sir Philip Francis on—Sir Eyre Coote (!)

(As Busted points out in quoting this item, its real point is to illustrate the extraordinary frankness with which the Nabobs in high

places vilified each other in the course of their private or official feuds: it should not be necessary to add that this was not the general view of the victor of Wandiwash and Porto Novo and the instigator of Plassey.)

Clive

"Mr Robert Clive, Writer in the service, being of martial disposition, and having acted as a volunteer in our late engagements, we have granted him an Ensign's commission upon his application for the same."

Dispatch from Charles Floyer, Deputy Governor of Fort St. David, dated 2nd May, 1747

*

Warren Hastings

Calcutta, Thursday morning (17.8.1780)

My dearest Marian—

I have desired Sir John Day to inform you that I have had a Meeting this Morning with Mr Francis, who has received a Wound in his Side, but I hope not dangerous. I shall know the State of it presently, and will write to you again. He is at Belvedere and Drs Campbell and Francis are both gone to attend him there.

I am *well* and *unhurt*.—But you must be content to *hear* this Good from me; you cannot see me. I cannot leave Calcutta while Mr Francis is in any Danger. . . .

My Marian, you have occupied all my Thoughts for these two Days past and unremittedly,

Yours ever, my most beloved,

W.H.

Hastings' Letters

*

Culpee, Sunday evening, nth January 1784

My Beloved Wife,—

.... I left you yesterday morning; I followed your Ship with

my eyes till I could no longer see it, and passed a most wretched Day with a Heart swoln with Affliction, and a Head raging with Pain.—I have been 3 Tides making this place, where I met my Budgerow, and in it a severe Renewal of my Sorrow. The instant Sight of the Cabbin, and every Object in it, and beyond it, brought my dear Marian to my Imagination with the deadly Reflexion that She was then more than 200 Miles removed from me, and still receding to a Distance which seems in my Estimation infinite and irretreiveable. In the heavy Interval which I have passed I have had but too much Leisure to contemplate the Wretchedness of my Situation, and to regret (forgive me, my dearest Marian; I cannot help it) that I ever consented to your leaving me. It appears to me like a precipitate Act of the grossest Folly; for what have I to look for, but an Age of Separation, and if ever we are to meet again, to carry home to you a Burthen of Infirmities, and a Mind soured perhaps with long, long and unabated Vexation I shall sail again with this Night's Tide Possibly my Apprehensions may be less gloomy when I have quitted this weary scene, but of One Thing I am certain, that no Time nor Habits will remove the Pressure of your Image from my Heart, nor from my spirits, nor would I remove it if I could, though it prove a perpetual Torment to me. . . .

O my Marian, I am wretched; and I shall make you so when you read this. Yet I know not why, I must let it go, nor can I add anything to alleviate what I have written; but that I love you more by far than Life, for I would not live but in the Hope of being once more united to you. O God Grant it. . . . Amen! Amen! Amen! Your ever ever affectionate

W. Hastings.
Hastings' Letters

*

Sandy Scott

Death

At Calcutta, the 9th instant, Sandy Scott, than whom perhaps there never was a better reel and strathspey player in India, and those sons of Caledonia, partial to the Highland

fling, must long bewail his loss; for to give him his due, in the words of honest Robert Burns, he was truly "a thairm inspiring body".

Calcutta Gazette, 12th April, 1796

*

Rose Aylmer

Death

On Sunday last, at the house of her uncle Sir Henry Russell, in the bloom of youth, and possession of every accomplishment that could gladden or embellish life; deplored by her relatives, and regretted by a society of which she was the brightest ornament, the Hon'ble Miss Aylmer.

Calcutta Gazette, 27th February, 1800

*

The poor young lady however (Rose Aylmer) instead of becoming a bride, was doomed to sink into a premature grave. She was attacked with a most severe bowel complaint, brought on entirely by indulging too much with that mischievous and dangerous fruit, the pineapple, against eating so much of which I had frequently cautioned her, but instead of my remonstrances being attended to they only excited her mirth, and she laughed at me for my grave sermons, as she termed what I said upon the subject.

HICKEY

*

Burns

I should like to have seen Elphinstone on that occasion (Commemoration dinner at Poona of the Battle of Kirkee, in November 1818) rise to propose "The immortal memory of Burns," and hear him add the words, "Success to his offspring," for a son of Burns was there, and sung one of his father's blythest lays. There is a Madras notification of February, 1811, that Mr

William Nicol Burns having produced requisite certificates of his appointment to be a cadet on this establishment, the Government in Council is pleased to admit him in that capacity, and promote him to the rank of an ensign, the date of commission to be settled hereafter. Was this the man, born in 1791, "the wee rumble gumption urchin of mine whom I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine," or was it he who stood of most interest, a man of pale face and grey hairs, at the Burns festival—Colonel James Glencairn Burns?

JAMES DOUGLAS

*

Byron

October, 1824—We have heard with sorrow of the death of Lord Byron; the other evening, as we were driving past a Greek chapel on the banks of the Hoogly, prayers were being offered for the repose of the soul of the departed.

MRS PARKES

*

Bishop Heber

April, 1826—We heard, with sorrow, the death of Bishop Heber, from my sister at Cuddalore, whose house he had just quitted for Trichinopoly; after preaching twice in one day, he went into a bath, and was there found dead. It was supposed, that bathing, after the fatigue he had undergone, sent the blood to his head and occasioned apoplexy.

MRS PARKES

•

*

The Bishop preached again . . . and gave very general satisfaction. I only wish I could hmake him a little more dignified in his manner and deportment, he speaks rapidly to everyone, shakes hands with all . . . and what is peculiar to him, he often quotes scraps of poetry and has a great memory in repeating them; he would still wear his white trousers every morning and

white hat—surely however hot he might have found silk as I did quite as cool as cotton.

Letter from Archdeacon Barnes to Mrs Barnes, dated April, 1825

*

Annie Besant

A visit to Mrs Annie Besant was not one of idle curiosity, and from the kindness of her reception of me she seemed to recognise this fact. Needless to say, she is not popular with the missionaries, but I do not think anyone could have aught but admiration for her in her single-hearted earnestness in her work. I found her seated native-fashion on the floor of a slightly raised platform in her reception room. All was spotlessly white. Some flowers and her typewriter were a Western note—as also were the chairs placed for her European visitors. She was dressed in Indian dress, and I quite envied her the comfort of it. While her religious views are opposed to what we consider orthodox, she is nevertheless doing useful work and from what I saw and heard, this bold brave English woman was having an elevating effect on those surrounding her and with whom she had to do. They love her, and for her great enterprise on their behalf she only has to ask in order to receive, and to receive liberally.

The Central Hindoo College was entirely built by her exertions, and if Ganesh ornaments its entrance-gate, what matters? Why not he as well as Minerva on our colleges? I only left Mrs Besant's presence with a sincere regard for the earnestness of her work.

ISABEL HUNTER

XIII—"CHARACTERS"

Quite apart from the genuine Great, at whom we have just been glancing, one comes across every now and then in the texts outstanding personalities distinguished by particular virtues or vices, by unusual eccentricities or by some other intrinsic interest. I have collected a few of them here—some already known to fame, others obscure.

This season (1790) deprived Calcutta of one of its principal ornaments by the departure of Mrs Bristow for England. She was a native of the little island of St Helena, her maiden name Wrangham; a fine, dashing girl, not by any means a regular beauty, but an uncommonly elegant figure and person. . . . Her natural flow of spirits frequently led her into extravagancies and follies of rather too masculine a nature; instead of seating herself like other women on horseback, she rode like a man astride, would leap over any hedge or ditch that even the most zealous sportsmen were dubious of attempting. She rode several matches and succeeded against the best and most experienced jockeys. She was likewise an excellent shot, rarely missing her bird; understood the present fashionable state of pugilism, and would without hesitation knock a man down if he presumed to offer her the slightest insult; in short, she stopped at nothing that met her fancy . . . executing whatever she attempted with a *naivete*" and ease and elegance that was irresistible. . . . She often declared that but for the object (of educating her children) she should prefer residing in Bengal to any other part of the world.

HICKEY (1790)

(Miss Wrangham was one of the heroines of A. J. Hicky's—the other Hicky, without the "e"—scurrilous and eventually suppressed "Bengal Gazette"; she appeared there under the nicknames of "Hooka Turban", "Turban Conquest" and "The St Helena Filly" and was the constant recipient of "Odes" and the constant subject of what would now be called "Personal Pars"—except that no Par today would be half so personal.)

Colonel Martin's other residence . . . is a palace on a very extensive scale, but in which the singularity of the Coloners taste is chiefly discernible. . . . Under the principal apartment are subterraneous rooms, intended for the hot season. This plan of living underground during the hot months being quite experimental, it would perhaps have been more reasonable to make the trial on a less expensive scale. The heat and smoke and smell, arising from the number of lamps necessary to light the dark chambers and passages, seemed alone sufficient to render the success of the scheme more than doubtful. In the middle of the largest of these dark rooms the Colonel had already raised his tomb, and the number of lights to be burned there, night and day, *for ever*, and the sum to be allotted for this purpose, were already mentioned.

TWINING (1795)

(Martin reappears over half a century later in the letters of Sir Herbert Edwardes; according to these, he was a Swiss who came out to India as a private soldier and made his fortune importing European luxuries for the Kings of Lucknow. He built his palace as a speculation hoping the King would buy it but the King—far-seeingly—thought it would be simpler to confiscate it for nothing when the old man died. "General Martin therefore ordered his body to be buried in a vault in the centre of the house ; and thus turned it into a tomb, which it would be a defilement for a Mohammedan to live in. The body was embalmed and for many years was exposed to view in the vault. Now it is covered over with the monumental slab, with a marble bust of the General on one niche at the head of the tomb, and two plaster of Paris busts at the sides. Round the tomb stand four painted figures of soldiers leaning on their muskets. . . . This palace-turned-tomb was finally bequeathed as a college for children of all religions, and last night we heard about a hundred and forty piebald boys sing the evening hymn with 'much voice, at all events'")

*

He was an uncommonly fine old man, upright, lively, and strong in voice and step; his features were fine, and his eye could still flash fire, though his hair was white as snow. He was the surgeon of the station, and had houses and indigo plantations

in the hills. He had an immense household, probably he did not himself know how many servants. His four sons were either clerks in Calcutta, or at the indigo plantations. They were not of a colour to introduce to the world, although I never could quite understand why the sons of a family were to be accounted unpresentable when the daughters were to have every advantage of countenance and education. The three daughters were just returned from a boarding-school in England, so lately indeed as to have the fashions much later than we had. They were extremely dark girls, and the youngest almost a negress in features. As is very common with girls of this kind, they were so devoted to dress that, although they had servants of every description to wait upon them and work for them, they spent the best of every day in dressing, and, when dressed, looked as if they and their clothes had been cast together in the same mould, so neat, so tight, so stiff were they. They wore what I had never seen before—immense high tortoise-shell combs which never fail to remind me of some old statue of Diana, with the lunar crescent at the top of her head.

MRS SHERWOOD (1808)

(Dr G——, surgeon at Boglipore; 70 to 80 years old; very wealthy; had been in India since his youth; married or lived with a native woman; seven half-caste children.)

*

Bhandoop, Island of Salsette, May 20, 1810. . . . As I wish to remark all that is uncommon in my travels, I must not omit the character of my hostess, if indeed I can do justice to it. I have seen women in India pretend that, on account of the climate, they were too sickly to nurse their own children, too weak to walk in their own gardens, too delicate to approach a native hut, lest they should be shocked by the sight of poverty or sickness. But Mrs A., with the face and the heart of an angel, is received like one by the poor and the wretched. . . . There is no medical man within many miles, and I have seen her lovely hands binding up wounds which would have sickened an ordinary beholder. . . . Her family consists of the daughter of a friend, whom she instructs with the diligence of a mother, a little black boy whom she rescued from famine and whom she is bringing

up as a mechanic, and her own two infants. . . . Her drawing is that of an artist; her judgment in music is exquisite, and her taste correct in both ancient and modern literature.

MARIA GRAHAM

(This paragon's husband had a rice and sugar-cane estate on Salsette; also a distillery "where an immense quantity of spirits of different kinds is made." His overseer was "a sensible Chinaman.")

*

If the young Savage who had lately the cruelty to knock down and trample on his aged Father, a respectable Man, does not instantly quit his Father's house, a few Friends of the old Gentleman's are determined to take the proper steps for his immediate ejectment, and the Writer of this engages to exhibit him, by Name, to the contempt and indignation of the whole Settlement. This hint, it is hoped, will be sufficient.

Calcutta Gazette, March, 1806

(Apparently it was; at any rate no more is heard of this curious affair.)

*

25th November, 1836. We had a long visit from a lady who is just come from Ava, where she has been two years without seeing any European woman, but one—and the Burmese treat the English just as contemptuously as the Chinese do. She was a nice good-humoured woman—all the nicer for bringing us a quantity of pretty Burmese curiosities. She said she was very fond of her one European friend at Ava, and thought her the cleverest woman she had ever seen, 'but she is not fond of jokes, and sometimes I wanted to laugh, and except a doctor, who came to Ava, and who talked nonsense, I really have not heard any nonsense for a very long time; but I hope at Calcutta everybody is not always grave.' I cannot hold out to her the most distant prospect of a joke, except the little we do in that way ourselves, and that grows less every day.

MISS EDEN

*

30th December, 1836. We had an old Mrs———here this morning, a friend of——, when he was in India before. She has been fifty years in India, barring one year, four years ago, which she spent in England; and she thought it a horrid country, and came out again. She is eighty-four, and is now going home, 'to give England another chance;' if she does not like it, then she says she shall come back and settle here for life. She is a fine-looking old body.

MISS EDEN



I knew in Bombay an old officer who had been at least forty years absent from Europe . . . I happened once to mention to him a great event which had taken place lately in Europe. He stared at me and said, "I know nothing at all about it."

Not discouraged, I started another topic connected with public affairs in England, when I received a decided check by his answering, "I take no interest at all in it." I still hoped to rouse him from such a state of apathy, and spoke of the admirable speech of some well-known politician, when to this he calmly replied, "I know nothing at all about him."

LADY FALKLAND (1848)



We received all the ladies belonging to the Gwalior contingent, yesterday, and the officers, only sixteen altogether, and four ladies, two of them uncommonly black, and the third, Captain——remembers as a little girl running about barracks a soldier's daughter, but she was pretty, and, by dint of killing off a husband," or two, she is now at nineteen the wife of a captain here. I should think she must look back with regret to her childish plebeian days. The husband interrupts her every time she opens her lips, and she had not been here two minutes, before he said in a gruff tone, 'Come, Ellen/ and carried the poor little body off.

MISS EDEN (1838)



20th March, 1838. We have a young officer staying with us now, who is to keep A——company while I am on the coast. He is a nice, innocent, good-natured boy, and as tame as can be. He has brought a cat and two kittens with him all the way from Bangalore, upwards of four hundred miles, and in the evenings he brings them into the drawing-room to pay me a visit and drink some milk, and he sits quite contentedly with them crawling up his great knees, and sticking their claws into him, just like Frank and our old cat at home. He has had six jews'-harps sent him by a brother in England, and he performs Scotch jigs upon them by way of "a little music;" and in the morning, when I go to lie down before dinner, he sits with Moonshee, keeping him to his work, and explaining matters to him. Altogether he is a very "tame boy," and I hope he will be a pleasant companion for the "Master," while I am obliged to be away.

Letters from Madras

*

13th March) 1840. We had two hours of fat generals and yellow brigadiers clanking in and out of the room yesterday; but one visit was rather amusing. The lady was like Caroline Elliot in her young days; married to come out here; landed a month ago; is in perfect horror at India; and evidently the poor husband has lost any charm he ever might have had by his guilt in inveigling her out here. I asked if she had got into her own house yet. "I have not seen a house in Barrackpore. Tweddell has taken a barn for me, but I am not in my own barn yet." "Have you found a good Ayah? She would help you." "I have got some black things Tweddell calls servants. I do not understand a word they say." She said she went to bed immediately after dinner, and I asked if she dined late. "How can I tell? There is no difference in the hours. Always shut up in a prison to be stung by mosquitoes. And then Tweddell told me I should be a little Eastern Queen. Oh, if I could go back this last year." She was dressed up to the last pitch of the last number of the *Journal de Modes*, which, poor girl, will not be of much use at Barrackpore, where the officers are too poor even to dine with each other; and I own, I think Tweddell has a great deal to answer for, and is answering for his sins in a wearisome life. But to the

by-standers who have not seen a fresh English girl nor a hearty English aversion for some years, she was an amusing incident.

MISS EDEN

*

There was in the room a lady who had been besieged in the Residency at Lucknow. . . . From her I heard some strange tales respecting the internal condition of the garrison. While some were starving, half fed on unwholesome food, and drinking the most unpleasant beverages, others were living on the good things of the land, and were drinking champagne and Moselle, which were stored up in such profusion that there were cartloads remaining when the garrison marched out. There was a good deal of etiquette about visiting and speaking in the garrison! Petty jealousy and "caste" reigned in the Residency; the "upper ten" with stoical grandeur would die the "upper ten", and as they fell composed their robes after the latest fashion.

RUSSELL (1857)

*

The colonel was a gaunt figure of six feet two, or thereabouts, with sallow sunken cheeks, and two little tufts of grizzled whisker near the corner of his mouth; he was dressed in a not uncommon morning *deshabille*, consisting simply of a shirt and red camlet jacket, a pair of immense *pajammas*, or native trousers, tied with a silken string at the waist, whilst an immense pair of spangled Indian slippers, with curly toes as long as rams' horns, adorned his feet; an embroidered velvet scull-cap was perched on the top of his head; and altogether he was as striking a specimen of the epicene gender of the Orientalised European as I had yet seen.

BELLEW (1843)

*

Mrs Vereker was a type of character which Indian life brings into especial prominence. . . . Herself the child of Indian

parents, whom she had scarcely ever seen, with the slenderest possible stock of home associations . . . she had come to India while still almost a child, and in a few months, long before thought or feeling had approached maturity, had found herself the belle of a Station, and presently a bride. Then circumstances separated her frequently from her husband, and she learnt to bear separation heroically. . . . Any number of men were for ever ready to throw themselves at her feet and proclaim her adorable, and she came to feel it right that they should do so. . . . The coldness of her heart enabled her to venture with impunity into dangers where an ardent temperament could scarcely but have gone astray; she, however, was content so long as she lived in a stream of flattery and half-a-dozen men declared themselves heartbroken about her; strict people called her a flirt, but Mends and foes alike declared her innocence itself.

Chronicles of Dusty pore (1877)

*

Sometimes an old Anglo-Indian, who had found his periods of leave and visits to England increasingly unsatisfying ("England seems quite a strange country nowadays. No one seems to have any manners and everyone is in such a hurry") would have settled down in the station where he had been happy with the golf-course and the friendly gossip in the bar afterwards, and by virtue of his long connection with the club would have been elected secretary year after year without question, and he would now (after the 1914-1918 war) find the changes almost bewildering. Such a one said to me, "Before the old club finally has to put up the shutters I hope I'm dead. I've made it a point in my will that I want to be buried on that little hill overlooking the eighteenth hole, and instead of the burial Service I want to have a panatrope play over my grave the Londonderry Air."

KINCAID (1938)

This section is perhaps the place wherein to enshrine "I, Ibrahim, the son of Candu the Merchant", who should certainly, I feel, find a niche somewhere in our gallery. Ibrahim was a Malay



Elephant coming to Natchik. Indian and his wife standing by.

moonshee (or *pedagogue*) toko, in 1810, was invited with many other moonshees to attend one of the Public Disputations in Persian, Urdu and Bengali held in the College of Fort William under the patronage "and in the personal presence of* H.E. the Governor-General—in this instance Lord Minto. Ibrahim, who is described as "the most singular figure of this motley group", wrote a lengthy account of his experiences, a translation of which—by a certain Dr Leyden—was given to that intelligent globe-trotter Mrs Maria Graham, It is something of a gem, as I hope my concluding extract here will show. Ibrahim's "Rajah" was, of course, the Governor-General, and his numerous "wives" were the feminine élite of Calcutta, invited for the occasion and ranked—as Ibrahim justly observes—on H.E.'s left.

An Account of Bengal and of a Visit to Government House, by Ibrahim, the son of Candu, the Merchant.

. . . . When the court was full, and I, Ibrahim, the son of Candu the merchant, was near to the throne, the Rajah entered, and every one moved different ways. . . . On that side of the hall which was to the left of the Rajah all the wives and family of the Rajah were arranged in a row one by one; and it is impossible to forget their beauty, for who could look on them without feeling unhappy at heart! And when everybody was seated, and I, Ibrahim, the son of Candu the merchant, on a couch between two pillars, the Rajah looked around from time to time, and often cast his eyes on the ladies,—when I could perceive that his heart was gladdened, for his countenance glowed with satisfaction, giving pleasure to all.

Among all the ladies there were six who were most beautiful, seated on chairs, being pregnant, some two, others six months; but there was one of the wives of the Rajah beautiful to excess, and she was eight months gone with child. She was kind and delightful to look at, of a beautiful small make, and she sat in front of a large pillar while a Bengalee moved a large fan behind her. Whoever gazed on her felt kindness and love, and became unhappy. She resembled Fatima, the wife of I, Ibrahim, the son of Candu the merchant, but she was more beautiful.

It is the custom of this great country, that the wives of the Rajah always sit on the left side of the throne. They have neither diamonds, nor cats-eyes, nor rubies, nor agates; yet they

are beautiful, and their dress is bewitching. Some looked tall and others short, but I did not see them stand; they appeared happy, and glistened like fish fresh caught.



XIV—CURRENT COMMENT

I have devised this final section as a receptacle for various reflections, moralisings, opinions, explanations and expressions of feeling permanent or transitory. The sub-heads will, I believe, sufficiently indicate their themes.

Was India Worth It?

Happy certainly then are those, and only those, brought hither in their Nonage, before they have a Gust of our *Albion*; or next to them, such as intoxicate themselves with *Læthe*, and remember not their former Condition: When it is expostulated, Is this the Reward of an harsh and severe Pupilage? Is this the *Elysium* after a tedious Wastage? For this, will any thirst, will any contend, will any forsake the Pleasures of his Native Soil, in his Vigorous Age, to bury himself alive here? Were it not more charitable at the first Bubbles of his Infant-Sorrows, to make the next Stream over-swell him? Or else if he must be full grown for Misery, how much more compassionate were it to expose him to an open Combat with the fiercest Duellists in Nature, to spend at once his Spirits, than to wait a piecemeal'd Consumption?

For in Five hundred, One hundred survive not; of that One hundred, one quarter get not Estates; of those that do, it has not been recorded above One in Ten Years has seen his Country: And in this difficulty it would hardly be worth a Sober Man's while, much less an Ingenuous Man's, who should not defile his purer Thoughts, to be wholly taken up with such mean (not to say indirect) Contemplations; however, a necessary Adjunct, *Wealth*, may prove to buoy him up on the Surface of Repute, lest the Vulgar serve him as (*Esop's* Frogs did their first rever'd Deity.

FRYER (1673)

*

A man on first arrival here (a griffin) cannot or will not

comprehend that "one and one make eleven." (Oriental Proverb). . . .

A friend, now high in the Civil Service, contracted, on his arrival here (Calcutta) about eighteen years ago, a debt of 15000 rupees, about 1500/. or 1800/. Interest was then at twelve per cent. To give security, he insured his life, which, with his agent's commission of one per cent, made the sum total of interest sixteen per cent. After paying the original debt five times, he hoped his agents upon the last payment would not suffer the interest to continue accumulating. He received for answer that "interest never slept, it was awake night and day;" and he is now employed in saving enough to settle the balance.

I wish much that those who exclaim against our extravagances here, knew how essential to a man's comfort, to his quiet, and to his health it is, to have everything good about him—a good house, good furniture, good carriages, good horses, good wine for his friends, good humour; good servants and a good quantity of them, good credit, and a good appointment: they would then be less virulent in their philippics against oriental extravagance.

We were glad to hear that our friend would not come out to India. It is a pity that men like him should be sacrificed—and for what? To procure a bare subsistence; for the knack of fortune-getting has been long since lost. Show me the man in those latter days who has made one,—always provided he be no auctioneer, agent, or other species of leech—and we will sit down and soberly endeavour to make one for ourselves.

MRS PARKES (1823-24)

*

It being necessary to keep a carriage for Mrs Hickey, I purchased a neat London-built chariot, for which I paid three thousand sicca rupees, a phaeton for my own use at eighteen hundred, and three excellent draught horses which cost me seventeen hundred and fifty, then considered a very reasonable price. All these heavy purchases, with the addition of wine and other liquors, always the most serious article in India, involved me in debt to an amount of upwards of forty thousand sicca rupees, for the whole of which I was obliged to pay an interest of

twelve per cent per annum, a debt so heavy as to prove a load about my neck for full twenty years afterwards.

HICKEY (1783)

*

An officer in the Company's service commonly commences his Indian career at the early age of eighteen; thus if we allow even "three-score years and ten," as the probable duration of his earthly pilgrimage, but poor remnant of life remains, for the enjoyment of the halcyon days to which he looks. While wasting the fine* energies of a vigorous youth, in apathy towards the circumstances which surround him, and vain aspirations for the future, the anxious fortune-hunter too probably forgets that "ere the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken," nature must bend beneath infirmity, and that which most truly endears the remembrance of his country, must inevitably yield to the general law. The fond parent, whose heart has for weary years, yearned for the voice of his beloved son; the companion of his youth, who would gladly have rejoiced in his success, can wait for him no longer; the wanderer may indeed return, but the scenes of his youth look dark, and his spirit cannot then rejoice in the longed-for greeting of unchanged affection, or the well-remembered smiles of once dear, and familiar faces. Meanwhile, the sojourner in the east, has himself acquired a weight of years, ill calculated to aid pleasurable enjoyment; his views, all subtending towards the distances of life, have afforded little pleasure to the passing hours, have garnered few self satisfactions to gild his declining age; and the fruition of such hopes, too frequently bring little in their train, but querulous repining, unrelished self-indulgence, and distaste for, and depreciation of the rational pleasures of existence.

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MRS POSTANS (1838)

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This is how a man of his (Sir Philip Francis) amazing energy and his boundless mental resources is reduced to write;—"The waste of spirits in this cursed country is a disease unconquerable, a misery unutterable." "I relinquish my family and friends, and I pass my life in one eternal combat with villainy, folly, and

prostitution of every species. If I carry home £25000 by the severest parsimony of five years, it will be the utmost I can accomplish. I would now gladly accept two-thirds of the money if I could be up to the neck in the Thames." After his card-winning he places his wants a little higher, as the possibility of attaining them seems open to him, but his horror of India is unabated. "Whenever I am worth a clear entire sum of forty thousand pounds secure in England, Bengal may take care of itself. No, not for that fortune would I spend the same two years again."

BUSTEED

(Cf. Macaulay, sixty years later—"There is no temptation of wealth or power which could induce me to go through it again.")

*

How people who might by economy and taking in washing and plain work have a comfortable back attic in the neighbourhood of Manchester Square, with a fire-place and a boarded floor, can come and march about India, I cannot guess.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

There is no sphere like India for a completely happy woman's life—her husband's helpmeet.

LADY EDWARDES (1848)

*

Society Reviewed

The manner of living among the English at Madras has a great deal more of external elegance than at Bombay; but the same influences operating on the society, I find it neither better nor worse. I am told that it was once more agreeable The English society of Calcutta, as it is more numerous, affords a greater variety of character, and a greater portion of intellectual refinement, than that of either of the other presidencies. I have met with some persons of both sexes in this place, whose society

reminded me of that we have enjoyed together in Britain. . . . Among the few here who know and appreciate these things, the most agreeable speculations are always those that point homeward to that Europe, where the mind of man seems to flourish in preference to any other land. If we look round us, the passive submission, the apathy, and the degrading superstition of the Hindoos; the more active fanaticism of the Mussulmans; the avarice, the prodigality, the ignorance, and the vulgarity of most of the white people, seem to place them all on a level, infinitely below that of the last refined nations of Europe. . . . This mixture of nations ought, I think, to weaken national prejudices*; but, among the English at least, the effect seems diametrically opposite. Every Briton appears to pride himself on being outrageously a John Bull; but I believe it is more in the manner than in the matter, for in all serious affairs and questions of justice, every man is, as he ought to be, on a footing.

MARIA GRAHAM (1810)

*

A healthy English person in a hard frost would decidedly look upon us all as half-witted. I heard George say yesterday, when he was asked the name of some individual, "I know it very well and have got it at the bottom of my mind; I could tell you by a great effort of memory, but if you don't very much care I had rather not make it." And that is just how we all feel now and then; if there is a glimmering of an amusing idea about one's brain, it is far too much trouble to bring it into speaking shape; and, in fact, it is quite clear to me that there is as great a level of intellect here as of country, and no person can be much cleverer than another; also that when anyone says, 'How stupid the society is here' they mean nothing personal to the individuals who compose it, but that such is the effect of the unfortunate situation in which they are all placed.

MISS EDEN (1837)

*

It is rather a bored little community, Manpur. I think they are all pretty sick of each other and one can't wonder. Even an

Archangel would pall if one met him at tea, played tennis with him, and sat next him at dinner almost every day of the year; how much more poor human beings—and Anglo-Indian human beings at that. Taken separately they are delightful, but each assures us that the others are quite impossible.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)

*

"Do you find amongst your European acquaintances any pleasing or accomplished women?" Not one—not the sixth part of one; there is not anybody I can prefer to any other body, if I think of sending to ask one to come and pay me a visit, or to go out in the carriage; and when we have had any of them for two or three days at Barrackpore, there is a *morne* feeling at the end of their visit that it will be tiresome when it comes round to their turn of coming again. I really believe the climate is to blame.

"They read no new books, they take not the slightest interest in home politics, and everything is melted down into being purely local." There is your second question turned into an answer, which shows what a clever question it was.

Thirdly. It is a gossiping society, of the smallest macadamised gossips I believe, for we are treated with too much respect to know much about it; but they sneer at each other's dress and looks, and pick out small stories against each other by means of the Ayahs, and it is clearly a downright offence to tell one woman that another looks well. It is not often easy to commit the crime with any regard to truth, but still there are degrees of yellow, and the deep orange woman who has had many fevers does not like the pale primrose creature with the constitution of a horse who has not had more than a couple of agues.

The new arrivals we all agree are coarse and vulgar—not fresh and cheerful, as in my secret soul I think them. But that, you see, is the style of gossipry.

Fourthly. It is a very moral society, I mean that people are very domestic in their habits, and there are no idle men. Every man without exception is employed in his office all day, and in **the evening drives**. Husbands and wives are always in **the same carriage**. It is too hot for him **to ride or walk, and at evening**

parties it is not considered possible for one to come without the other; it is quite out of the question. If Mr Jones is ill everybody knows that Mrs Jones cannot go out, so she is not expected.

Fifthly. I believe in former days it was a profligate society, as far as young men were concerned, the consequence of which is that the old men of this day are still kept here by the debts they contracted in their youth. But the present class of young men are very prudent and quiet, run into debt very little, and generally marry as soon as they are out of college.

MISS EDEN (1837)



Thomas—and Mrs—Atkins

Well, well, Gunner Thomas Smith, like privates Brown, Jones and Robinson who have gone before him, drops imperceptibly into Indian ways;.... he learns with wonderful promptness the value of a bheestie (water-carrier), and he acquires a taste for the pleasures of repose in a shorter time than could possibly have been expected. . . . It is pitiable to see the state of helplessness to which some soldiers—"old stagers" in India—arrive—a helplessness founded on erroneous and ruinous precedents. . . . Doubtless a large, and to the eye of a European, an overwhelming staff of natives must, from the very peculiar character of Indian warfare. . . . be constantly in attendance on every English regiment; doubtless it is not only prudent but necessary to protect our friend Thomas Smith as much as possible from the fatal effects of the sun, unless you wish a week after his arrival in the country to accompany him with "arms reversed" and a band wailing forth the sad music of the "Dead March in Saul"; but it is not—it cannot be necessary or judicious to pamper him as though he were some indolent rajah, and to "wink at" his procuring natives to clean his boots or appointments, or to brush him for parade.

MAJENDIE (1859)



The heartless indifference, with which the wives of these men (British other ranks) think and speak of the conduct and probable

fate of their husbands, is indeed sad. Deaths are too frequent among them to make much impression; they consider it with the same apathy that a Hindoo would talk of an affair of "Nuseeb," (destiny) and speedily merging the remembrance of the past, in an anxiety for a fresh union, haste to "furnish forth the marriage tables." During the season above alluded to, a gunner who died of fever in the hospital, left a widow, somewhat distinguished for her personal comeliness. An hour after her husband's death, three of his comrades proposed to her, and before a week expired, her weeds were laid aside. The woman's second husband also died, and she again married with similar promptness. A third time, death severed, and Hymen retied the mystic knot; and last of all, but again a widow, "the woman died also."

These speedy remarriages are far from uncommon; frequent cases occur, in which a wife engages herself to a suitor during her husband's life, and trusts to the chances provided by arrack and climate, for the fulfillment of her contract. Disproportion in age, is never considered in a soldier's marriage; a grisly bombardier of forty, unites himself to a girl of twelve, with the full consent of her parents, who are probably present at the marriage.

In remarking on the irregularities and vices of soldiers' wives in India, it is only just to notice the temptations, restraints, and miseries, to which this class of women are subject, in a country so little calculated to cherish their better feelings, or to provide them with necessary occupation, or common comfort. Unable, from extreme heat, to move out of the little room allotted to them in the "married men's quarters," during the day, and provided, for two rupees a month, with a Portuguese "cook boy," who relieves them from the toil of domestic duties, the only resource of the soldiers' wives is in mischievous associations, discontented murmurings, and habits of dissipated indulgence. Strolling in the evening through the dirty bazaars of a native town, probably under the auspices of an ayah, who may have picked up a smattering of the English language, these unhappy women purchase liquor, to conciliate their careless husbands. On returning late to the barracks, the truant wife frequently finds her partner already in a state of intoxication; mutual recrimination follows, and then succeeds a scene for which we may well weep, that humanity has such. But alas! these brutalities are common; and knowing them as we do, can society marvel

that with such circumstances around her, the European woman in India becomes their victim, or falls into the practice of that dishonesty, drunkenness, and debauchery, for which she is so commonly and so severely up-braided.

MRS POSTANS (1838)

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Solemn Thought in Simla

Twenty years ago no European had ever been here, and there we were, with the band playing the Turitani' and 'Masaniello,' and eating salmon from Scotland, and sardines from the Mediterranean, and observing that St Cloup's potage à la Julienne was perhaps better than his other soups, and that some of the ladies' sleeves were too tight according to the overland fashions for March, &c.; and all this in the face of those high hills, some of which have remained untrodden since the creation, and we 105 Europeans being surrounded by at least 3,000 mountaineers, who, wrapped up in their hill blankets, looked on at what we call our polite amusements, and bowed to the ground, if a European came near them. I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off, and say nothing more about it.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

And in Delhi

In short, Delhi is a very suggestive and moralising place—such stupendous remains of power and wealth passed and passing away—and somehow I feel that we horrid English have just 'gone and done it,' merchandised it, revenueed it, and spoiled it all. I am not very fond of Englishmen out of their own country. And Englishwomen did not look pretty at the ball in the evening, and it did not tell well for the beauty of Delhi that the painted ladies of one regiment, who are generally called 'the little corpses' (and very hard it is too upon most corpses), were much the prettiest people there, and were besieged with partners.

MISS EDEN (1838)

*

(She had sailed for home on zyrd March, 1857; he had "stood on the shore till the form of the 'Ava' was lost in the distant haze of the river". A curious echo here of Warren Hastings, gazing forlornly after the "Atlas" and returning to the heart-rending reminders in his "cabbin")

*

The Changing India

The good old hookah days are past; cheroots and pipes have now usurped the place of the aristocratic silver bowl, the cut-glass goblets, and the twisted glistening snake with silver or amber mouthpiece. . . . The race of Eurasians is not so freely supplied with recruits. . . . There is now no bee-bee's house—a sort of European zenana. . . . There are now European rivals to those ladies (the native kept women) at some stations. It was the topic of conversation the other day at mess that the colonel of a regiment had thought it right to prohibit one of his officers from appearing publicly with an unauthorised companion at the band parade; and the general opinion was that he had no right to interfere. But the society of the station does interfere in such cases, and though it does not mind beebees or their friends, it rightly taboos him who entertains their white rivals.

RUSSELL (1858)

*

It was a strangely changed Anglo-India, (i.e. after the 1914-1918 war.)

The vast old bungalows were in many districts replaced by neat little villas with electricity, telephones and labour-saving devices. The compound too would be smaller. A garage replaced the row of stables, for people did not ride much nowadays. You could not afford both car and stable, and with tarred roads in the bigger towns riding was much less pleasant than in the old days. Besides, one did not remain long in any one district and a car was much less trouble to move than a horse. It was true that some Indians complained that the new motorist-official hardly saw the life of the villages except along the main roads. But that could not be helped; with so many committee-

meetings **and** increasing work at headquarters it would have been impossible to do without a car. And Indians complained about so many things in the new Anglo-India. Some (but these were the elderly) complained that nowadays the English-men married much too early in India. The old-fashioned administrator with his Indian mistresses had, it has been argued, a knowledge of the people such as his more virtuous successor could hardly hope to gain. . . .

Club libraries were far better stocked than before the war. You would find rows of new books. . . . And there would be other radio fans with whom one could discuss the problems of aërials and the tiresome atmospherics resulting from stormy weather in the Red Sea, which prevented a clear reception of the news, the sporting events and the concerts. And there would be people fresh from home leave, for hill-stations were less frequented—you could get home by air in almost the same time as it took to get to Kashmir from most parts of India.

KINCAID (1938)

*

The end of the war (the 1914-1918 war) meant that numbers of young men arrived out as new recruits to the big firms, and their manners and slang and reluctance to wear starched collars in the hot weather deeply disturbed the seniors. . . . Just because they had been through the war these young men seemed to consider they had a right to behave differently from their elders and betters and to flout all the traditions of Calcutta society; one always seemed to be having them "on the mat" and telling them that a member of an old-established firm, which prided itself on employing Gentlemen, should learn how to hold his drink (which meant the amiable torpor consequent on a traditionally vast dinner and a succession of dark sherries, madeiras, ports and brandies) and not be heard laughing loudly in the hall of a club or making indecorous remarks in a cinematograph theatre. . . . They did not seem satisfied with the grand old clubs of Calcutta which as everyone knew were the best in India. There was the Saturday Club where one could listen to forty Goanese bandsmen dressed up like Central Europeans at work on "Pagliacci" or "In a Monastery Garden", and every

Friday night there was a formal ball where you were certain to meet all the other senior people in Calcutta. . . . What more could you want?

But in 1918 Firpo's Restaurant was opened **and** was at once a success. There was a jazz band; the furniture was in the P. and O. Louis Quinze style; and the place was lit in what was considered a very advanced manner. Even some of the seniors succumbed to the lure of this Continental-looking place . . . a practice subversive of the whole tradition of Anglo-Indian hospitality.

KINCAID (1938)

*

Farewells to India

"The children cried bitterly when they saw the shores receding, and truly we were all very sad."

MRS SHERWOOD

*(Sailing finally for home on the
Robarts, 11th January, 1816)*

*

As the day of my departure approached I became more affected than I had any idea I should have been. The thought of leaving a place I had resided in for so many years, the number of persons I was sincerely attached to that were in it, added to the melancholy and desponding countenances of my favourite servants . . . all contributed to increase my dejection and gloom. I had a favourite terrier dog called Tiger who seemed to understand that something extraordinary was on foot and appeared as melancholy as myself. . . . By noon . . . I had accomplished the parting visit to Sir John Royds, and a few other highly-esteemed friends; at one o'clock I sat down to a magnificent tiffin, which Mr Ledlie had kindly prepared for me, but my heart was too full to get a morsel down until I had swallowed two or three large glasses of claret, which relieved me from a sensation almost amounting to suffocation, and enabled me to eat a little.

HICKEY (1808)

"Adieu, Bombay! May I forget the ever-
 Pestiferous hole, all other pests excelling
 In dust, mosquitoes, pariah dogs, and liver:
 Not Milton's limbo would be worse to dwell in.
 Life in that Island is scarce worth the living—
 A sheer existence without one emotion
 Save from the Physic dying 'Pills' are giving,
 Themselves more fit to quaff the patient's potion.
 And Rampart Row, our Fort's great New Bond Street,
 No more down thee I'll drive—a Bombay blade,
 Cravatted, stayed—my Rosinante fleet,
 * Or glide along the peopled Esplanade."

From a Bombay Newspaper of 1829

*

But, although the hope of returning home had latterly buoyed me up, and rendered all the sufferings from the climate light, yet, when the event actually arrived, it was attended with far different feelings. . . . The recollection of the many years of youth and happiness passed away; the sober anticipations of the future which had taken the place of expectations of unbounded enjoyment. . . . the parting with numerous valued friends endeared by similarity of habits and pursuits, so; weakened, for the time, my anxiety to quit the country, that I no longer wondered at the determination, or rather change of determination, so fatal to many, of "remaining one year more."

MRS LUSHINGTON (1827)

(For the final sentiment, cf. the Dutch epitaph at Sadras quoted by Hickey

"Mynheer Gludenstack lies interred here,
 Who intended to have gone home next year.")

*

I love the very recollection of these days, the easy pleasantness of every detail. I loved the attentions so freely and unstintingly given; these never failed or lacked. It was a Miss

Sahib. She must be looked after; and not once, or ever, can I recall rudeness or the slightest approach to it, but instead, a superfluity of all that was kind and nice. Dare I contrast English ways? I will not detail them, but only two journeys have I taken in England in one year, and on each occasion there was default and impertinence for which there was no justification or need.

ISABEL HUNTER (1909)

*

When the spell of the East falls veil-like upon me - I see a procession of familiar faces, those of friendly thieves and liars, amongst which Peter's is strangely distinct, and I am conscious that despite his appropriation of my stockings, my spoons and my substance generally, and ayah's shameless annexation of what was left, I still hold them both in affectionate remembrance. They are friends and unchanging ones, for if I ever return to find my face forgot by those of my own race, these two would come to me with welcoming words of deferential devotion to anticipate my desires and to steal my possessions.

I am in the land of my birth again now, but the joys of the day that is done are still with me. As for the rest, philosophy asks whether it is better that the dhoby should steal one's garments, and hire them out for weddings, funerals, and sea-bathing indiscriminately, or that the steam laundry should riddle them with holes and amputate entire limbs! *Pour moi, c'est egal.* Here I am learning formalities, conventionalities, and many other useful things, but I have my hours of longing for the land of the lotus, with its subtle scents, its impenetrable solitudes, and its unfathomable peoples.

J. M. GRAHAM (1914)

*

And so I am going home, home to my own bleak kindly land, "place of all weathers that end in rain." I am going home to my own people . . .; and I am going to you. And the queer thing is, I can't feel glad. I am so home-sick for India.

OLIVE DOUGLAS (1913)



TAILPIECE

Back East

The wheeling months go round
And back I come again
To the baked and blistered ground
And the dust-encumbered plain
And the bare hot-weather trees
And the Trunk Road's aching white;
Oh, land of little ease!
Oh, land of strange delight!

" Home's woods October-red,
Home's pastures summer-green,
Are as a memory fled,
Are as they ne'er had been;
Ragged our gardens stand
In destitute undress,
Stripped by the sun-god's hand,
His all too close caress.

THE SAHIBS

Eyes that the other day
On ordered scenes could feast
Now meet the disarray,
The turmoil of the East—
Rough-hewn unfinished stone,
Mad landscapes half begun
Sketched out in monotone
And slaughtered by the sun.

Yet oh! the sailing moon
The tropic night becalms
And oh! the lit lagoon
Beyond the coco-palms,
Kind evening's ecstasies
And the deep dome of night;
Oh, land of little ease!
Oh, land of strange delight!

Madras Mail (1933)

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APPENDIX

List of Authors Quoted

(The figures in brackets give the approximate dates of the author's experience in India referred to in the quotations, except where (P) is added when the date of publication is referred to.)

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Talboys Wheeler: *Madras in the Olden Time* (1861) (P)

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