

# CHARLES ACLAND

A POPULAR ACCOUNT  
OF THE MANNERS AND  
CUSTOMS OF INDIA

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## A Popular Account of the Manners and Customs of India

### PREFACE

The author of the present work was a clergyman, who, along with his wife, quitted England about the beginning of the year 1842, leaving behind him several young children, to whom, as appears from the letters he constantly addressed to them, he was most affectionately attached.

They left the country full of hope that they should all be reunited at some future period; but, before he had been three years exposed to the climate of India, he fell a victim to it. It is somewhat melancholy to find him at the outset rejoicing in the very circumstance which in some measure perhaps occasioned his death. The first destination selected for him was little in accordance with his own taste; and when it subsequently was altered from Assam to Cuttack, he expresses himself delighted with the change, though the first-named province was much more remarkable for its healthfulness than that to which he at length proceeded.

Mr. Acland felt the warmest interest in the education of his children, and, to improve their minds, determined, on quitting England, to send home, from time to time, accurate accounts of his progress, that they might be made acquainted with all he beheld – the places through which he passed, the aspect of the country, its climate, productions, flowers, trees, shrubs, and wild animals. Many an interesting adventure is related in these pages which the author met with in the jungle; the beating of which by the hunting parties, who go forth in bands for that purpose, is described with an animation calculated to awaken much interest.

The letters addressed by Mr. Acland to his children have now been thrown into the form of a Journal, as this method was considered best suited to the general reader. The Editor has, however, been careful to preserve throughout the easy familiar style in which the father first wrote them, that to the children of others they may be equally acceptable and useful.

The books hitherto published on India have been in general, from their bulk, confined to persons arrived at a more advanced period of life; and the Editor of the present volume hopes in some measure to familiarise the subject by bringing it down nearer the comprehension of the youthful reader. This work is intended to describe Indian manners in an interesting way, and will in some measure, it is hoped, supply a portion of the want that has long existed in our literature in this respect. To render the subject more attractive, Mr. Acland was careful to introduce anecdotes and short narratives throughout, which are calculated to amuse, while instruction is at the same time conveyed.

One distinguishing feature may be observed in the whole – viz. a fervent spirit of devotion, which breathes through every page of the original manuscript. Such passages the Editor has thought it better to omit, as the advice from a father to his children, clothed in the simple language he considered it best to employ, though beautiful and touching in itself, would scarcely appear interesting to the general reader. For this reason the substance of his counsel has been compressed into the present brief Preface.

He impresses upon his children the necessity of living ever in brotherly love, of sustaining and comforting one another, and of seeking the Divine aid in every emergency of life, whether great or small. He shows them how, by trusting implicitly in God and acting according to His commandments, they will attain a peace of mind above all the happiness which an indulgence in the pleasures of this life can bestow. He explains to them, in the gentlest terms, how necessary it is for their welfare here and hereafter that they should act ever in accordance with the expressed wishes of the Almighty;

and that they must never cease to remember that He moves about them everywhere, and sees their every action, hears each passionate word, beholds each unbecoming gesture, and will reward or punish according as they indulge in or abstain from evil. In several beautiful passages he portrays the unceasing watchfulness of the Almighty in providing for our daily wants, in supplying us with every necessary of life; and inquires, with truth, Ought not every little heart to be daily grateful to Him, without whose will the sun cannot shine, or rise, or set; without whose will the refreshing showers could not force and raise up around us the beautiful and necessary things of life? Then he inquires, How can we better show our gratitude for these blessings than by acting in accordance with the wishes of Him who is the cause of so much good?

These words were spoken by a father to his own children; but I would ask those of my young friends into whose hands this little volume may fall, does it not equally touch them? Do they not feel the truth of these sentences? Coming over the many thousand miles which stretch between India and this country, these letters were cherished the more by the three little children to whom they were addressed; and now that the hand is cold which traced the lines, how much more will they be prized!

Whatever may be the fate of the volume with the public, to those whom it more intimately concerns it will be a lasting remembrance of their father, and of the melancholy circumstances connected with his early death. For their sake, the Editor trusts that the present work may meet with at least a moderate share of success; and that, in the endeavour to render more familiar to the youthful mind the names and habits of some of the inhabitants of India, he may not altogether fail.

*London, Sept. 1847.*

## Madras, June, 1842

We quitted England in the course of March, 1842, and reached Madras in the month of June of the same year. I shall give but a brief sketch of our voyage.

Soon after leaving England, having arrived near Ushant, situated on the north-west coast of France, a tremendous storm came on; the waves rose high and washed the deck, while the ship itself pitched to such a degree that the very dinner rolled off the table; in the night my wife was tossed out of bed, and thrown to the other side of the cabin. We were in the greatest danger of being drowned. I started out of my hammock, but was unable to stand upright. Towards morning, however, the wind abated.

After this storm had passed, the ship went forward rapidly until we reached the equator, where she lay becalmed for several days. The heat at this point of our voyage was excessive; we used to lie about on the deck almost all night, taking care, however, to cover our faces if the moon was shining; for it is said that, in these hot climates, if any one goes to sleep under its light, he is in danger of losing his sight, and even his life.<sup>1</sup>

We now proceeded more slowly until we had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, where another storm came on. Every sail was taken in; yet, without their assistance, we ran, in two days, 545 miles. The waves rose as high as mountains, and the ship seemed to toil up one side, and to send the bowsprit up into the air, then, plunging down again, seemed to bury it in the sea. I was standing with my wife at the door of the dinner cabin when a large wave burst in through the upper part of the ship, flooded the room, and shivered one of our large boats to atoms.

As we were passing the equator, too, we suffered from a tremendous thunderstorm. The heat was excessive: not a breath of wind stirred the air. About twelve o'clock a little cloud, about the size of a man's hand, rose in the horizon: gradually it spread until it hung like a huge black mass over the ship. I stood and watched its increase, when suddenly a vivid flash of lightning shot from the heavens, and almost blinded me. At the same moment a crash of thunder bellowed round the ship like the noise of a thousand cannons. The lightning slightly struck one of our passengers and the mate, but did not inflict any serious injury. The rain now descended: not a sharp thick shower, such as you may witness in England, but as it were all in one mass, and soon every trace of the storm passed away; the sun burst forth, and the ship and sails were dried in the course of a few minutes.

Calm weather was ours now until we reached Madras. During our voyage we observed many curious kinds of birds, the principal of which was the stormy petrel. These creatures quit the land, and fly many thousand miles over the sea in the track of ships, following them by night and by day. The whale-bird is about the size of a thrush, white in colour, and may be seen hovering about the great fish from which it derives its name.

### CAPE PIGEON

The Cape pigeon is a very beautiful creature, about the size of our own pigeon, white, with black spots on its body, and a blue, glossy head. We several times amused ourselves with catching them; and the way we contrived was, to let fly from our hands a piece of thread several yards in length, which was carried out by the wind, and the pigeon, flying across it, became entangled in it. In fluttering about in the endeavour to extricate itself, it became only more firmly secured; and then, drawing the string towards us, we caught the bird, and, placing it on the deck, suffered it to walk about. The legs of this pigeon are so peculiarly formed that they are unable to spring up from the

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<sup>1</sup> It is doubted whether the injury does not rather arise from the damp night-air than from the effect of the moon-beams.

ground, and can only rise from the crest of a wave, or throw themselves from the edge of a rock. The albatross is a large white bird, which has been known to measure fourteen or sixteen feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. We used to catch them sometimes by casting out a hook and line, as for a fish.

The Cape hen, which follows the ship in flocks, is large and black, measuring about ten feet from wing to wing. Occasionally we caught a glimpse of the tropic-bird, called by the sailors the boatswain, because of its long pointed tail resembling the pigtail which these men used formerly to wear.

## PILOT-FISH, ETC

The booby is a large brown bird, about as big as a common hen. I must not forget to tell you something about the pilot-fish. Every shark, whether old or young, is accompanied by a little fish about twelve inches long, and striped like a zebra, which keeps always near the nose of the shark, and seems to guide him to his food.

As I have in this place said so much about birds and fishes, I may as well tell you a little about the animals here in Madras. The first I shall mention is the cow, by which all the carts and many of the carriages are drawn along – sometimes, too, very swiftly. They are much smaller than English cows, and have a hump on their backs. Camels may be seen in the streets patiently carrying heavy loads of goods: the people, however, treat them very cruelly.

As I was going to the cathedral last Sunday I saw a mongoose, a little green and yellow animal, something between a ferret and a squirrel. It is said that when bitten by a snake it runs and rubs the place over with the juice of a certain plant, which immediately cures it.

My samee, or native manservant, who is a Malay, gave me one about as large as a kitten, and quite as playful. It will attain to the size of a cat; it follows me about, sleeps on the foot of the bed, and if a snake comes into the room will instantly kill it. When an Indian mother wishes to go out, she need only just tell the mongoose to mind the cradle, and then he lies down by it, and suffers neither man nor reptile to approach. This creature, once tamed, is quite wretched out of human society.

The cobra de capello is one of the most poisonous snakes with which we are acquainted. I saw a girl playing with some of them the other day, but their fangs had been extracted.

There are a great number of beautiful birds here; and green paroquets can be purchased for three pence, while an avadavad costs only one penny. The cock avadavad should, when kept, be confined along with twelve hens in a cage.

The large carrion-crow is as common here as the sparrow is in England, and is so tame that they fly close to the houses, and even look in at the windows. Nobody is allowed to shoot or hurt them, because they make themselves useful in carrying away all the dirt from the town. Large vultures are almost as numerous.

I must not forget to mention the mosquito, which is a gnat exactly like those you see in England. Great numbers fly about all the night, and some people suffer much from their bite, but they never touch me.

The flowers here are beautiful, and some smell exceedingly sweet. There are two tall trees, as large as elms, covered with red and yellow flowers about the size of a plate. In the hedges, too, we see very splendid cactuses. I shall be able, however, to tell you more about these things when I have been here longer.

The fruits are exquisite, but it is dangerous to eat them in any quantity. For a pine-apple nearly as big as your head we pay only two anas – that is, three pence; but they are not exactly like those you buy in England. Here they are quite sweet, and soft and juicy as a peach. The mango is a yellow fruit about the size of a large orange, the inside of which is full of a very rich sort of custard. The plantain resembles a dahlia-root, and has very much the same taste as cheese. The guava is in appearance

like an apple, but possesses the flavour of a strawberry. There are several other kinds of fruit, but I have not time to describe them now. I am very fond of the pine-apple and the orange, but do not care for any of the others.

## HEAT

Mother-of-pearl may be bought very cheap here. It is found in a particular kind of oyster-shell, of which I can get three or four for a halfpenny. Though the heat here is excessive, I do not suffer from it: the thermometer in the large room where I am sitting is now  $93\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ . The heat causes a kind of rash called the prickle-heat, which is very disagreeable. The sensation to which it gives rise is much the same as would be caused by running needles into the body. In every room, hanging from the ceiling, is a large fan, called a punkah, about four times the size of the door, and a boy is continually employed in swinging it backward and forward, and the current of air thus created cools the whole room. The windows are without glass. Venetian blinds serve instead, and sometimes mats, which are kept constantly wetted. The water soon turns into steam, and, evaporating very fast, carries off with it the latent heat.

When my wife goes to sleep, the little black boy, with no covering but a pair of drawers and a cap, stands near and fans her, while every now and then he sprinkles her face with water as she reclines on the sofa.

## FAKIRS

The people here are nearly all black, and wear very little clothing. The population is extensive. At dinner we have generally eight or ten men to wait upon us, but they are slow in their movements, and very lazy. The Arabian Nights mentions the fakirs. I have seen some here that have let their feet grow in one position until they cannot move them.

## CURIOUS DISEASE

Some of the inhabitants of Madras are afflicted with a curious kind of disease, in which one leg swells to the size of a man's body, while the other is no thicker than the limb of an infant.

When you meet in the street with a native who is at all acquainted with you, or who wishes to express his thanks for anything, instead of merely saying "Thank you," or "How do you do?" he presses his hands upon his eyes, and says "Salaam, sahib." Some English persons, on going out for a walk, may be seen to carry a whip, with which, if the natives are at all troublesome, they lash them; but this is a cruel practice. Ladies are prevented by the heat from walking abroad here, and gentlemen seldom do so, but go about in what are called palanquins, which I will describe hereafter. When we ride out, however swiftly we go, a man called a coolie runs by the side of the carriage. We are obliged to get up here at about half-past five in the morning, and then we go out for a drive, or in the palanquin; at half-past seven the sun is too powerful even for that exercise: we then return home, take a cold bath, and breakfast. At half-past six in the evening we are enabled to go out again a little. In the middle of the day we take a nap.

## July 1st

A few days ago I saw a native wedding. At about nine in the evening I was disturbed by a noise of drums and squeaking trumpets. Looking out of the window, I saw a large party with torches conducting the bride to her husband's home. She was entirely covered by a white veil, and walked in the midst of her relations.

I went to pay a visit to the Newab, a native prince of these parts, but did not succeed in obtaining an interview. He is about fifteen years of age, and generally goes out in a carriage drawn by seven horses. His uncles ride by his side on elephants, while his cousins run with the carriage.

The natives are a fine athletic race of men, with every appearance of possessing talent and intellect. The tricks of the jugglers are very entertaining: they will swallow swords, throw up three or four knives or cannon-balls, and catch them on their necks, and pull balls of cotton out of their throats, and make snakes dance.

## **Bishop's Palace, Calcutta, July 15**

### **WATERSPOUT**

Here we are arrived safely at this place, after a very disagreeable voyage, the worst part of which was the travelling up the river Hoogly. We were becalmed for some time, and merely drifted up a few miles a-day with the tide. However, I was much interested one day by watching a cloud, which, after moving and whirling about for a little time, began to send down a little thin point towards the river. Presently the column increased in size, while underneath the waves seemed to rise to meet it; and when they had done so a great quantity of the water was sucked up by the cloud, which grew larger in consequence, and then steered away towards the land: this was a waterspout.

The place in which we live – that is, our hotel – is a large house, three stories high, surrounding a square, and on each side are forty-two windows in a row.

Immediately after landing I went to pay my respects to the archdeacon, and to inform him of my arrival. Not finding him at home, I proceeded to the bishop, who treated me very hospitably, and invited us to his house.

### **BISHOP'S PALACE**

On returning home I found that during my absence the archdeacon's wife and daughter had been calling on my wife, for the purpose of inviting us to their house; but having already accepted the offer of the bishop, we, of course, were compelled to decline this. In the bishop's palace we have two very large apartments assigned to us, besides a bath-room, and a verandah, about three hundred yards long, to walk in. I was scarcely located here, however, before I received an order to proceed to Gowhattie, in Assam, and to assume the clerical superintendence of the whole province. At Gowhattie there is one European lady, and there are five European gentlemen, who are the only ones within two hundred and seventy miles. My parish, if such it can be called, is about twice the size of England, and I shall be continually travelling about.

But I must now tell you something about this place. The principal animals here are buffaloes, elephants, and tigers, of whose numbers you may form an idea by the fact of the Government having offered a reward for every tiger's head. Last year, in the province of Assam, the number of heads brought in was two thousand six hundred, and yet these animals seem to be as numerous as ever.

We shall have to travel in a little boat, called a budjeon, with two cabins, up to Gowhattie. The boatmen are black, and we shall be the only passengers on board. We must be provided besides with two other boats, the one with the fowls and goats in it for cooking, and the other with the luggage. We shall be rather more than two months on the voyage, and must take with us enough provisions for a year. When we reach Gowhattie the boat must serve us for a home until we have built one with mats and reeds.

There are some large birds here called adjutants, about five feet high, with long white legs, black bodies, bare necks, and a beak like pelicans. They are generally seen perched on the tops of houses. The fire-flies are very pretty: on a fine night a number of them are seen flitting about the lanes and gardens glittering like stars.

The bull-frogs make a noise at night almost as loud as the bark of a dog. A pretty brown and white bird is to be found here, singing much like a blackbird; it is called a miner.

Calcutta is well termed the city of palaces, since every house is a noble mansion. Most of the rooms are at least fifteen feet high and twenty-six feet square, and along every story there is a

verandah, supported by stone columns. The language of the people here seems to have retained many traces of the Portuguese, who were here before the English. For instance, the bishop is called de Lord Padre, and I go by the name of Padre Sahib.

### **NATIVE SERVANTS**

We have no bells by which to summon the servants, who lie on the mat outside the room door; when we require them we call out, without rising from the sofa, "Qui hi?" (who is there?) then the sirdar, or valet, runs in. We give him our orders, which he reports to the others. Although I am staying at the bishop's, and dine at his table, and use his carriage, I am obliged to have five servants. I have one kitmajar, or waiter, who does nothing but attend at table. The bishop's kitmajars will wait only upon their own master. Then I have one ayah, or lady's-maid, for my wife; a sirdar, or bearer; and a matee-sirdar, or assistant-bearer. These men make the beds and assist me to dress. I have also a punkah-bearer – that is, a man who sits outside the room, and is constantly employed in pulling a string fastened to a punkah, or enormous fan, without which no Englishman could live in India. Besides these I pay a pooney-bearer, or water-carrier, and a matranes. When I go up the country I shall be obliged to have a consummar, or head servant; a dobee, or washerwoman; a dugay, or tailor; a syce, or grass-cutter; and one or two others. We cannot do with less, because, if I were to ask the kitmajar to fetch my coat, he would twist his mustachios, and say, "Me no sirdar;" or if I were to ask my sirdar to wait at table, he would say, "Kitmajar no do dat."

**August 6, 1842**

**CUTTACK**

The bishop has changed my appointment from Assam to Cuttack. The different towns I shall have under my jurisdiction are Midnapore, Balasore, and Poonee. Midnapore is situated eighty miles south of Calcutta, and Cuttack two hundred and forty. Poonee stands on the coast a little to the south of the great plain of Juggernat'h, which forms a part of my district.

We expect to leave Calcutta next week, and shall go down the river as far as Ooloberriab. Here we shall quit the boat for palanquins, and shall travel by night, it being too sultry to proceed by day. At Midnapore we shall stay for a few days at the judge's house, whilst I look about for one. Here we shall probably remain about three months, and shall then proceed to Poonee. Whichever of the two towns I discover to be the pleasantest and most agreeable I shall make my permanent abiding-place, only travelling occasionally to each of the others. Every one tells me my station is one of the healthiest in Bengal. Midnapore, standing on a high hill, will be best for the wet weather; Poonee, on the sea, for the hot months; and Cuttack, with a nice sea-breeze, for the winter.

The principal dangers we have to apprehend on our journey to Midnapore are the dacoits, or mountain robbers, the tigers, and the sudden swelling of the rivers from the rains.

Now, I must tell you a little of our mode of life here. At half-past five in the morning we have a cup of coffee, and then go out for a ramble. It is the only hour in the day in which it is possible to walk. If we were to go out for half an hour in the middle of the day it would most likely cause our death. At seven we take a cold bath, and pour great jars of water over our heads. I used to enjoy bathing in England, but here it becomes the greatest possible luxury. After this is over we read or write until nine, and then breakfast. At two we have tiffin, which is lunch, with plenty of meat. At five in the afternoon we have an hour's drive, at half-past seven we dine, at nine tea, and to bed at ten. These are the regular Indian hours, but as soon as I have a house of my own I mean to dine at three.

When on any occasion I ask for a glass of cold water it is brought to me with a lump of ice in it. This is excessively refreshing in a country like this, where the thermometer is at 90°. It is brought in shiploads from America. At new and full moon there is what is called a "bore" in the river Hoogly, that is, the tide, instead of coming up gradually, swells up in one large wave. When I saw it the other day it rose thirty feet in height.

## Midnapore, September 12, 1842

### JOURNEY TO MIDNAPORE

On the 14th of August I sent two boats full of furniture to Midnapore, and on the 16th we started ourselves in a boat with two large cabins and one small. I had nine Indians to manage it. Another smaller boat contained our palanquins, two servants, and a little sort of kitchen.

In going down the Hoogly river we met with an accident, and were nearly overturned; the wind drove us with great force against a large ship in a severe squall. We however reached Ooloberriab, a native village on Hoogly, in safety. Here we turned into a canal, up which we journeyed for some miles, and then anchored for the night. The next morning, having slept on board, we proceeded on our course, and reached the Khatah Ghat, or landing-place (pronounced gaut), at about twelve o'clock. Here we remained until four in the afternoon, entered our palanquins, a kind of square boxes, which are carried on men's shoulders, handsomely painted outside, with soft cushions inside, and lamps like a carriage. In this sort of thing we move about everywhere, and in crossing a river do not wet our feet. To each palanquin there are eight bearers, four of whom are employed at a time; one mussaulchee, or torch-bearer, runs by the side, along with one baugh-whaller, to carry boxes made of tin, and called patarahs. Each man carries two slung to a stick over his shoulder.

My wife travels in one palanquin, and I in another. We had taken care to write beforehand that a dâk, or men, might be in readiness to carry us on at each stage; and we therefore proceeded rapidly through the whole night.

### ARRIVAL

Soon after leaving Khatah Ghat we found the road for two miles under water, which reached far above the men's knees; and at one time, indeed, I was afraid it would have entered the palanquin; but the only accident that actually happened was the breaking of one of the baughley-whaller's sticks, and the tin patarah, containing clothes, floated away, but, after some trouble, was again secured. We slept most comfortably in our palanquins during our journey, and arrived at Midnapore early in the morning. Here we stayed at the house of the judge until I could choose a home for myself, in which we are now at last settled. Everybody here is most kind and hospitable, and, indeed, it is necessary it should be so, for, excepting in Calcutta, there are no inns, and travellers would fare very badly were the houses of the principal people closed against them. But when you go on a visit you must be careful to take your own servants, sheets, towels, and soap. My house is called a bungalow, which I chose as being the most economical. A bungalow is a thatched cottage, with only one ground story.

The floors of the rooms are not made of wood, but a sort of cement which looks like stone. The house stands in the midst of a large field called a compound, which belongs to me, and the servants' dwellings are scattered around.

I have a flower and kitchen garden, fowl-house and place for goats, kitchen, stable, cowhouse, and a banyan-tree. The pathways through the grass are of fine gravel, and the hedges are composed almost entirely of aloes and cactuses, mixed with a very sweet-smelling flowering shrub, and here and there a bamboo, which is a most beautiful tree, resembling a very tall weeping-willow. The sensitive-plant grows wild about the compound, and bears a very pink flower resembling that of the red cloves.

The banyan-tree is abundant here. Each branch projects stalks downwards, which take root in the earth, and after a few years one tree resembles a cluster, and covers a large space of ground. I have several aloes in my garden, which are just flowering. They have thrown up a straight stalk

about twenty feet high. A large cactus is now in bloom. It is about ten feet high, and each stem or leaf is thicker round than my leg. This kind bears a very beautiful large white flower, which opens only at night. In my kitchen-garden are the mango, the plantain, Indian corn, pine-apple trees, and many others.

Carpets are not used here, but the floors are covered instead with India matting. In each room is a punkah, which I have before described.

We procure water for drinking from a large tank or pond; and as we cannot purchase meat, I have provided myself with thirty-five ducks, sixty fowls, four goats, and three kids, which last are almost ready to eat; the goats we shall keep for their milk. The judge made me a present of a beautiful fawn of the spotted deer, which is becoming very tame. I am just going to join a mutton-club. Four persons enter into partnership, and agree to keep a small flock of sheep; one of which is killed twice a week, and then each partner is provided with a quarter of mutton, and each in turn has the liver, heart, and head. A gentleman yesterday sent me four guinea-fowls, and another has promised me six pigeons as soon as I have a place to keep them in.

## INSECTS

I have just begun to make a collection of insects, snakes, and butterflies and moths, of the most beautiful kind. The chameleon is very common, and changes its colour according to the temper it is in. I have one which is generally of a brilliant green; but if its anger be roused, it becomes covered with large black spots, and when hungry with white spots. These are the only changes in its colour I have as yet observed: but I have seen others yellow; others, again, black, with yellow spots. It is said that each chameleon has ten different variations of colour. There is to be seen here a light-brown lizard, called the bloodsucker, which is constantly running about the walls in the rooms. Whenever we take up a paper or a book, we are sure to find two or three cockroaches under it – not such cockroaches as you may see in England, but great ones three or four inches long. The grasshoppers come into the house in numbers, and grow to an uncommon size. You may hear them chirruping half a mile off. The ants, of which there are three sorts, are a great nuisance. Every house swarms with them; and unless the legs of tables, drawers, &c., are kept constantly standing in jars of water, they attack the dinner-cloths, and in fact everything they can reach: 1st, there is a very small red ant, whose bite causes a very hard red swelling, which continues very painful for some days; 2nd, a great black ant, about the size of an English wasp, which bites, but does not sting; 3rd, the white ant, rather larger than the common English ant, which come in a swarm, and in one night will devour a table or a shelf full of books. You may come down in the morning and find your table and books apparently all right, but no sooner do you touch them than they all crumble away to powder.

## REPTILES

There are a great number of snakes about here, though I have not yet seen one. I suspect that my mungoose or ichneumon keeps them away, as he is an inveterate enemy to all vermin. A venomous lizard, about a foot long, black, with yellow stripes down the sides, often comes into our verandah, but as soon as it hears the mungoose it disappears with all possible despatch; as do also the poisonous centipedes, of which there are several in the house. The noise of the mungoose is very peculiar, generally purring like a cat, but when angry it barks short and snappishly, while every hair on its long tail stands on end.

I have already mentioned to you that there are here the tiger, the lion, the monkey, the leopard, the buffalo, the elephant (tame), the spotted deer, the jackal, the flying fox: all these I shall describe as the opportunities offer; now I shall tell you something about the monkey.

I was walking out early in the morning, and reached a very large pepul-tree, covered with its red berries. Presently I heard some one chattering over my head, and looking up beheld an enormously long ape as tall as myself, with a white face and great whiskers. He gazed at me for a moment, and then chattered again. The noise becoming louder and louder, I ran from under the tree, and soon saw a great number of these animals of different sizes come leaping down, and, after a stare, as much as to say "don't follow us," they made a few tremendous leaps, and escaped into the jungle.

The Indian buffalo has no hump on its back. It is like an immense black cow, but exceedingly fierce. As yet I have seen only tame ones. A gentleman who lives here was walking out in the jungle the other evening, with the intention of shooting some birds, when he saw before him a large bull buffalo. When alone these creatures are much more fierce than when with the herd. He did not, therefore, much relish his close acquaintance; and, turning round, strove to creep quietly away. Hearing a loud roar behind him, he looked back, and beheld the buffalo in full chase after him, tossing his head most furiously. The gentleman scarcely knew what to do, as there was no tree near into which he might climb; but he was surrounded by low bushes. Turning suddenly round, therefore, he stood still, and, looking steadfastly at the buffalo, loaded his gun. On came the animal, nearer and nearer, looking fiercer and fiercer. At last, when about twenty yards off, he stopped one minute as if in hesitation, and then, with a loud roar, turned his head, and, tearing up the ground with his hoofs, was on the point of rushing onward, when the gentleman raised his gun as a last resource, and fired. The ball entered through the eye into the brain, and the monster rolled over the plain.

I have since seen the skull and the horns, which are of great size. The elephants are very large, and there are none but tame ones here. The major of the regiment quartered at this place has offered to lend us one whenever we are inclined for a ride.

The jackals are a source of great annoyance at night: they come into the compound and howl round the house, and make a dreadful noise, but are not dangerous. There are swarms of wild dogs too here, called pariah dogs – quite harmless. They resemble a hairy greyhound with a fox's head. The flying-fox is a sort of bat. Its large black wings are nearly four feet from tip to tip, and the body is like a small fox. They fly about the trees at night, and pick the fruit and berries. The birds are very beautiful. There are many sorts of doves and pigeons. One sort of the last-named is quite green; as is also the fly-catcher, which has a long single feather in the middle of his tail. The mango is about the size of a pigeon, yellow, with green stripes. There are also the pretty little amadavad, and many others.

I am making a collection of large beetles.

## **SOIL – CLIMATE**

Midnapore is situated on a high table-land, or flat-topped hill, about six miles across, and is much cooler than the greater part of India. The soil is about a foot deep, and underneath it is a volcanic rock, so porous that the rain soaks into it as soon as it falls, thus rendering the place dry and healthy. From the middle of June to the middle of October there are tremendous storms of rain almost every day. Then it is cool and pleasant till February. After that time the heat increases, and the weather is quite dry until April; from which time until June it is intensely hot, with occasional hurricanes and thunderstorms, of which we have had several most magnificent ones lately; and from the height of the hills we seem almost to be in the midst of them.

## **PRODUCTIONS**

Indigo, rice, and grain are plentiful. The first is obtained by soaking the leaves of the plant in water until they are rotten, when they deposit a thick blue sediment, which is formed into cakes, and is used for dyeing cloths.

We have some wild silkworms, from which the natives manufacture a coarse sort of silk. The rice grows in fields which are under water, and looks like barley. These fields beautifully illustrate the expression in the Bible about casting your seed upon the waters, and after many days you shall find it again.

The greatest expenses here are servants and house-rent. I pay for my house, which is one of the cheapest in Midnapore, forty rupees a-month; a rupee is two shillings. I keep as few domestics as I can; but am obliged to have eleven men and one woman. The men are —

- 1 consummar, or headman.
- 1 kitmajar, or waiter at table.
- 1 sirdar, who attends to lamps, furniture, &c.
- 1 bearer, who works the punkah and helps the sirdar.
- 1 dirgee, or tailor, who mends stockings, and makes gowns, coats, shirts, &c.
- 2 maistrees, or carpenters.
- 2 mollees, or gardeners.
- 1 motee, who sweeps the rooms and keeps them in order.
- 1 beastee, or water-carrier.

We neither feed nor clothe them: indeed their food consists of nothing but rice, except the consummar and kitmajar, who are Mussulmans. Their pay varies from three to ten rupees a-month. Many people keep forty or fifty men. The sirdar, or bearer, sleeps on a mat in the verandah; the others in houses in the compound. They are all forbidden by their religion to do the work of any other; their fathers and grandfathers performed the same duties, and so will their sons and grandsons also. They are a thievish set, and we dare not leave anything in their way that they can steal.

There is at this moment a little grey squirrel hopping about in the verandah, — facing the gate of the compound are several tame buffaloes, — and a little beyond is an elephant lying down basking in the sun and lashing his trunk about upon the grass.

There is an insect here called the flying-bug; it resembles in appearance a very large ant with wings, and, if one of them flies through the room, it leaves so disagreeable a smell that it can hardly be borne for an hour afterwards.

## **September 15**

### **THE "POUJAH OF TOOLS"**

To-day is a rustic festival; the carpenters and all other workmen have a holiday, and, daubing all their tools with red paint, cover them with flowers, and then kneel down and worship them, and beg them to work well and not to break during the next year. This is called the "poujah of tools."

## October 9, 1842

### STORM

We have had several thunderstorms here. A few days ago I saw a large black cloud coming up against the wind. Gradually it spread until it covered the whole sky. The wind now died away for a few minutes, and then rose again and seemed to rush from all quarters of the heavens at once, and formed a sort of whirlwind round Midnapore; then from the darkest part of the cloud flashed a vivid streak of lightning, followed almost immediately by a terrific clap of thunder. For three hours the storm continued, and scarcely three minutes elapsed between each clap, while we saw the lightning running along the ground for several yards.

### SNAKE

The other morning two men who lived in Midnapore caught a cobra de capello, or hooded snake, and they were examining it when suddenly it bit them both, and they died in the course of half an hour. We have not yet seen any snakes in our house, although most people frequently find them. This, as I think I told you, I attribute to our keeping the mungoose, of which the snakes are much afraid.

The chikary, or huntsman, makes a large oval shield, which he covers over with leaves: in the upper part are two very small holes. When he perceives a bird he crouches down behind his screen, keeping a watch through the two little holes, and creeping on very slowly. When he has approached near enough, he thrusts forward a long thin stick like a fishing-rod, and touches the bird with one end of it, on which there is a little lime; the bird sticks to it, and then the man draws back the pole and secures the animal.

In this way a great number of partridges are taken, with snipes, woodcocks, pigeons, &c. I had two hoopoes given me the other day. The Major who commands this station has four elephants for the use of the troops under him, to carry their tents when they are marching; and whenever we like it he lends us one for a ride. On the back of the elephant is placed a large pad, and on that is a thing like a great cradle, with two seats in it. A man sits on the neck with his feet in stirrups of rope, and a pointed piece of iron in his hand, which he presses behind the elephant's ears to guide him. Another man runs by the side and encourages the animal in Hindustanee. When we want to get on his back, the man on the neck presses the iron rod on the middle of the animal's head, and he kneels down; a ladder is immediately brought, and we climb up into the seat, or houdah, as it is called, and then the huge monster rises again. His pace is very slow and very jolting. He is not allowed to pass over any bridges, lest his weight should shake them down; he accordingly goes through the water instead. Neither may he go where he is likely to meet many horses, lest he should frighten them.

My costume here would make you smile. I wear thin shoes, white stockings, white trowsers, a short black cassock reaching a little below the knees, and a hat made of pith covered with black merino – the crown is about four inches high, and the rim about six or seven inches wide. This is my out-of-door dress. Indoors, unless when any one calls, I wear a white jacket instead of the cassock. I am without any waistcoat. At a dinner-party, black silk socks, black trowsers, and my long black silk cassock.

The only coins in use at Midnapore are the pice and the rupee; the pice is worth a farthing and a half, and the rupee about two shillings. Another kind of money passes here, viz. a little shell called a cowrie, of which 120 are worth a pice. At Madras and Calcutta there are many other sorts.

The insects are a great nuisance here. If the candles were not protected by a glass shade they would be instantly extinguished. Thousands of insects of all sizes swarm, jumping and flying about the lamps, of all colours, green, yellow, blue; and many of them sting, whilst others smell most abominably.

Every morning the mollie, or gardener, brings in a basket of vegetables for us to look at, and select what we shall require for the day's consumption. The cold weather here begins about the middle of October, generally on the 15th, and we are all looking very anxiously for it; but by cold I mean only such a lower degree of heat as will enable us to go out in the middle of the day (provided we carry a great parasol), which we cannot do now.

### **DINNER COSTUME – NATIVE SERVANTS**

At a dinner-party every one brings his or her own table servant. This assemblage has a very pretty appearance: the ladies are all in white dresses and short sleeves, and the gentlemen in white jackets and trowsers, except the Major and myself; he wears a red jacket, and I a black cassock. Behind each chair stands a dark-brown man with long black beard and mustachios, dressed in a sort of white tunic and a white turban, with a coloured sash wound several times round the waist. As it would be the greatest mark of disrespect for a servant to appear in the presence of his master with covered feet, they all leave their shoes outside the door. After the meat is cleared away, before the puddings are brought in, the servants go out and smoke for five minutes. There is not a man, either Mussulman or Hindoo, except of the very lowest caste, who would eat anything that came from the table of a European. They would consider it a degradation, and would not even drink out of anything we had ever used, or touch what we had cooked. The Hindoos eat only once a-day, unless on their grand feasts. Their food then is boiled rice, with perhaps an onion and a little spice in it, which they eat with their hands.

### **LANGUAGE**

The language of this country, though confessedly a compound of two or three Eastern tongues, appears to me to have many remains of what must have been the original language of man, that is to say, those which must have existed from the very earliest time bear a close propinquity to the words of other and later languages. Several instances which came under my notice bear out this opinion.

It is curious to observe how the different castes or ranks here keep distinct, and it is this which renders so many servants necessary. The man who lays the cloth would feel degraded by dusting a chair, and he who dusts the chair would rather leave his place than dust the room. Again, two men of different castes will neither eat, drink, nor sleep together. Their bed is a mere mat, which explains well that saying of our Saviour, "Take up thy bed and walk."

The other day my basin had not been emptied. I told the carah of it, whose business it is to attend to my apartment, and he went a hundred or more yards to call the matee, because it would have been beneath his dignity to throw the water out into the adjoining bath-room. The men here are a sadly idle set; they make almost slaves of their wives. Early in the morning we may see troops of women going out into the jungle, from which they return in the evening with great fagots of wood; these fagots are about twelve feet in length, and in the middle quite two in thickness, and are carried on the head. The poor creatures are obliged continually to stop and rest.

The higher classes of the natives wear a kind of loose white gown, down to the knees, and very loose trowsers, also white embroidered slippers, no stockings, and a white turban. The lower classes wear nothing but a long white cloth tied round their hips.

Every one here, both native and European, takes a cold bath at least once a-day. When a native dies his body is burnt, and to make the funeral pile every native keeps four or five large trees growing

in his garden. As soon as he dies, one, or two, or three trees, according to the man's rank, are cut down and surrounded with a great quantity of dry stubble, on which the body is placed. Formerly, his wife was burnt alive at the same time. This was called a sati. There are a great many tombs of holy men about the country, and on these the people throw little wooden images. There is one tomb here on which are placed two large dumb-bells, and the people imagine that every Sunday night the man who is buried there rises up and plays with them. There is one very disagreeable custom here, which exists more or less all over India; it is called dustoorie. Whenever anything is bought, for every rupee that is paid the seller is obliged to give the servant of the purchaser two pice; so that the more he has to buy, the better it is for the servant; and if a master were to say he would not allow dustoorie, no native would enter his service.

I have just been to look at the man who is making me some white jackets. The women here never do any needlework. The men sit down on the floor, and hold the work between the great toe and the next.

### **DESTRUCTIVENESS OF THE WHITE ANT**

I was the other day in want of a sheet of pith, on which to fasten some butterflies, and, going into my dressing-room, where I knew I had left four pieces on a shelf only the day before, I found them apparently in good condition; but, on taking them up, discovered them to be only so much dust. I then examined the other things upon the shelf, and found them to be in the same state. This was the work of the white ant, which was swarming about. I called the carah and sent him to the bazaar, or the place where all the little shops are, and told him to procure me sixteen pice worth of turpentine, and when it was brought I spread it over the shelf, and, soaking into the wood, it destroyed the ants. If let alone they would, in about two days, have eaten the chest of drawers, all my clothes, and everything in the room. I have just been engaged in catching with a green net on the end of the bamboo a most beautiful swallow-tailed butterfly, and in doing so frightened away a jackal, who was so impertinent as to intrude into the compound in the middle of the day.

## Midnapore, November 11, 1842

A friend has just made me a present of a very small kind of monkey, about nine inches high, of a light-brown colour. His antics are often very amusing. I fasten him by a chain to a thick pole in the compound, at the top of which is his house. He will sometimes turn his waterpot upside down and sit on it in the gravest possible manner. He will then perhaps stoop down and gather a blade of grass, and examine it as attentively as though he were inquiring to what species and genus it belonged. Perhaps by this time several large knowing-looking crows, something like English magpies, will have collected round him, holding their heads on one side and looking as if they were listening very attentively to his lecture on botany. Presently you would see the sly little monkey turn his eye to see how near they are, and then with one bound he will catch hold of the nearest crow by the neck; but the crow is the stronger of the two and always gets away safe. These crows are as common as sparrows and quite as tame, for they will hop into the verandah and pick up anything the parrots drop. We have two parrots; they are of a kind very common here; so I told a man to go out and catch me a couple, as I wanted to teach them to talk. He did so, and they are now getting very tame. I gave him a few pice for his trouble. They are of a kind that I do not remember ever to have seen in England. The upper mandible is red, the lower black. From the lower mandible extends on each side a broad black stripe, to where we suppose the ears to be; and there is another black stripe from one eye to the other. These stripes give the bird a very peculiar appearance. The upper circle resembles a pair of tortoiseshell spectacles.

I had a young hyæna given to me, which I made every endeavour to tame, giving him milk and food, but nevertheless as soon as I approached he flew at me. As he has scarcely any teeth I did not fear him, but took him in my arms, being careful to keep a tight hold on his neck. He slept during the day, but showed an inclination to go out at night, but, not being permitted to do so, continued making the most extraordinary noises resembling the sobbing of a child in pain. The servants were all afraid of him. Having kept us awake that night, I resolved the next to try him outside the house, and accordingly, fastening him up, I gave him a box to sleep in. The next morning I found he was dead. The servants declared he had been killed by a pack of jackals, but I shrewdly suspected they themselves to have been guilty.

The other day I caught one of those beautiful little squirrels which I have before described. It is grey, with a broad yellow stripe down each side. The body is about as big as my thumb, and the tail the size of my middle finger. I borrowed a common squirrel's cage, but the little thing was so small that it immediately struggled through the wires, and the mungoose, perceiving it, killed and devoured it. A great many of them live in the thatch of our house.

### MUSK-RAT – MUNGOOSE

The musk-rat is a small sharp-snouted animal, from which musk may be extracted. The scent rising from it is overpowering. All the houses here swarm with them, but the mungoose has either killed or driven away all that were here, and our house therefore is quite free from the smell. The mungoose is very destructive. I just left the room for a few minutes, and while absent it commenced demolishing some eggs which I had brought in from the fowl-house: there were eight on the table; he had broken five over my papers and then dipped his paws in the ink and ran over the table. Whilst punishing him for this fault I held him by the neck, but he nevertheless managed to give me a severe scratch with his claws. He is a thorough beast of prey, and will eat nothing but animal food except sugar.

## COBRA DE CAPELLO

The prawns here are most delicious, and many of them are as large as a good-sized lobster. I was crossing my compound in the dusk a few evenings ago, after feeding my fowls and ducks. I walked slowly, thinking of England and my children, when I happened suddenly to cast my eyes upon the ground. I started back on perceiving within two paces of me the dreaded cobra de capello – its head raised, its hood expanded, and manifesting every sign of anger. Two, or at most three, steps more, and I should have trodden upon it and received the fatal bite. Unfortunately I had no stick in my hand; I called the servants to bring bamboos, but by the time they came it had glided into its hole, and I went home thanking the Supreme Being who had saved me from the fearful danger. Since that time I have not been out without a large bamboo in my hand, for, although I have stopped up the hole, yet the cobra de capello is, no doubt, still in my compound. The bite of this snake is most deadly.

During the last fortnight I have heard of three persons having been killed by it in Midnapore. Two of them were hunters, the other was one of the wives of the Rajah. She put her hand into a cupboard to procure something, when a cobra, which had concealed itself there, bit her. When a person is wounded by this venomous reptile he generally expires within an hour. The only possible cure, and that is an uncertain one, is to swallow every few minutes a glass of brandy with some eau de luce, or smelling-salts, dissolved in it, while a man stands near beating you with a heavy whip. Or, instead of this, you may be fastened to a carriage and be compelled to run as fast as possible. The object is to keep you awake, for the danger of the bite consists in the heavy lethargy it produces. The remedies applied, however, are sure to bring on a violent fever, which frequently proves fatal. Few diseases in this country last longer than an hour or two. Fever, cholera, and inflammation of the liver, the three great scourges of India, commonly prove fatal within from two to twelve hours, so that no one can exist here without being constantly reminded of the uncertainty of human life. It is curious that I, who dreaded so greatly the reptiles of India, should have been at once sent to the station where they most abound, for there is probably no place in Bengal where serpents and lizards are so plentiful. Our house is infested by numbers of centipedes, which get on the chairs and on the clothes in a most unpleasant manner. However, we have neither of us yet been bitten.

I have not seen a scorpion alive. My wife and I were walking in the compound the other day, when we saw a very large snake looking at us through the hedge of aloes. It was of a light-brown, and was, I think, five or six feet long.

The other day my servants brought me in a venomous snake which they said they had killed in the compound; I took it up by its tail and carried it into my wife's dressing-room to show it to her. I laid it down on the floor, and soon it began to wriggle away, and, raising its head, turned at us. Fortunately there was a stick at hand, and, taking it up, I killed the animal with one blow. So great is the dread of them here, that no one ever sleeps without a light, lest, stepping out of bed at night, he should place his foot upon some venomous creature; most people keep a long bamboo in every room. We never put on our shoes without first examining well to see that there is nothing alive in them. The oil which we burn in the evening and at night is extracted from the cocoa-nut and has a most agreeable smell. For this purpose cocoa-nuts are brought from Ceylon and all the neighbouring islands. This oil could not be used in England, because it congeals into a sort of fat when the thermometer is at 64°.

## YAMS – POTATOES

We have a kind of root here which they call a yam, although I do not think it is one. It is brown outside and white within; about two feet long and thickest at the middle, where it is four inches in diameter. This they boil and then fry into lumps; it is exceedingly nice. Potatoes are scarce, dear, and bad, except sweet ones, which I like; they are very stringy, and taste like potatoes mixed with sugar.

## BAMBOO

I think I have described to you the graceful appearance of the bamboo-tree, but it is its extreme usefulness that renders it so precious. It is a sort of hollow strong cane, and serves for the upright posts at the corners of the native houses and also for the door-posts. To our own bungalows or thatched houses it forms the rafters to support the thatch; it is used for scaffolding and for ladders without any shaping or preparing. One joint of it makes a very good bottle; a long piece of it, with one side cut off and the stoppage at the joints cut away, makes a waterspout or watercourse, or a thing for fowls to eat or drink out of. In short, it would be tedious to enumerate the many uses to which it is put.

I had the other day an instance of the extent to which servants carry the system of doing each his own work and no one's else. I had been feeding the parrots with a little rice and had spilt a few grains of it upon the table. I called the barah, or furniture-cleaner: he said it was the parrot's food, and therefore it was the waiter's business to clean it up. I told him to do as he was bid, but he would not, and then I said that if he did not I should discharge him with a character for disobedience; this he preferred to doing what he considered was not his own work, so I sent him away at once.

None of my servants can speak a word of English, and I am sometimes rather at a loss on this account; but I always keep a dictionary on the table, and I am rapidly acquiring a knowledge of the Hindustanee language. There are no shops that Europeans can go to, except at Calcutta. In the country, which is called the Mofussil, a sort of pedlers come round with goods. I offer them generally one-third of the price they name, and they in most cases take it. The other day, my wife was making up her accounts, and asked the kitmajar how much he had given for a certain article; the man said, "Three rupees." My wife replied that she did not think he had given so much; he answered, "Yes, three rupees." She said, "Now, I don't believe you gave more than two rupees;" to which his answer was, "Yes, I gave two rupees." Still she did not credit him, and said, "Now, I am sure you only gave one rupee;" and he replied, "Yes, one rupee." And he was quite satisfied: and all this time he answered as calmly as possible, and did not appear in the least ashamed; and yet this man is one who is considered a very good servant, and whom I believe to be as honest as any one I have.

## November 12

### EARTHQUAKE

Last night, a little before ten o'clock, my wife was gone to bed, and I was sitting up reading and writing. In this country, you may know, the servants at each house, instead of having a clock, strike a gong at every hour. It is a flat circular plate of bell-metal, which, when struck with a wooden mallet, gives forth a very loud ringing sound. Just before the gong struck ten, I heard a noise like that of a buggy (or gig with a large head to it to keep the sun off) approaching.<sup>2</sup> I thought to myself, "Why, there must be a party somewhere to-night;" at which I wondered not a little, because every one asks the Padre Sahib to their parties, and I had received no invitation. The next moment the noise seemed to increase, and become like the motion of a large heavy carriage. Almost immediately after, with a sound like rolling thunder, the whole house rocked backwards and forwards, while I was nearly thrown off the chair on which I was sitting.

The rumbling continued, I should think, for about a minute before the shock of the earthquake came, and for about a quarter of a minute after, while the shock itself may have occupied about ten minutes.

I was quite startled; and, proceeding to my wife's bed-room, advised her to get up and put on something warm, lest we should have to pass the night out of doors. I then went to the store-room, and made the best provision I could for a bivouac: my preparations were, however, needless, as the shock was not repeated.

I can compare the motion to nothing so well as to the pitching of a small boat in a short cross-sea, or where two tides meet one another. My wife said her bed gave two distinct pitches up and down. While I was making my preparations for departure I heard a loud noise of crows, ducks, fowls, and all sorts of birds, cawing, cackling, and screaming, as if they were very much frightened. The natives all round started up and blew their conchs (a sort of shell, which they use instead of a trumpet); and this morning every one is talking about the earthquake.

### POPULATION

Speaking of the natives reminds me of the subject of the population of India, which is very much exaggerated. It cannot be compared, in proportion to the extent of the country, to that of England. There are said to be 40,000 natives in Midnapore, though I much doubt the fact; and then on every side, farther than the eye can reach, extends a vast expanse of thick jungle (that is, bushes growing so close together as to be altogether impassable, and full of tigers, deer, leopards, buffaloes, elephants, &c.); and as the same is the case throughout the whole of India, I should think that nine-tenths of the country consists of thick, close jungle, or enormous swamps. Here and there, amidst all this, is found a small native village, composed of a few huts; but the population in such places is probably not above one in thirty square miles on the average; this is, of course, a mere rough guess. The jungle-men, who are nearly black, though not at all resembling the negro in feature, are said to be the original inhabitants of the country. Their religion is unknown, and I believe they possess no written language. The people were driven into the bushes by the lighter race of men, whom many suppose to have been some of the ancient Egyptians, probably not less than two or three thousand years ago. Amongst this race sprang up, even subsequently to this, the religion, or rather superstition,

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<sup>2</sup> It is the most common sort of carriage in India.

of Hindooism. Again, about seven or eight hundred years ago, the whole country was overrun and conquered by the Mohammedans. Seventy or eighty years ago we obtained a firm footing in a small portion of the country. Not long after, the Mahratta chiefs attacked the Mohammedans in various places; the Mohammedans called upon us for assistance; and thus we in time became possessors of almost the whole country.

The greatest difficulty in the pronunciation of the language is the letter *h*, which is always aspirated, and never pronounced as it is in our *th*, and yet this letter often comes after a consonant.

The money in the Mofussil, or country, is a source of much annoyance. If you want to change a ten-pound note, they give you no gold, but 100 rupees; if you want change for a rupee, they give you 64 pice; and if you change a pice, they give you 24 cowries. But as there are no shops, and all the people bring their goods to the house, this does not signify much.

If you were to go to Midnapore, and to ask a native where Acland Sahib lived (sahib means white gentleman), he would not be able to tell you; but if you were to ask for the Padre Sahib, he would immediately direct you to my house.

When I came here I was going to stay with the judge: I told the palanquin-bearers to take me to his house, mentioning his name, and we were carried to almost every house in the station; until at last we met a European, who told the men it was the judge sahib we wanted, and then they soon found the place. I am called Padre Sahib; Mrs. Acland is Padre Sahib ke Mem, or Padre Sahib's lady; a married woman, mem sahib; an old maid is mem; and a young lady is bibi sahib, or white lady baby.

### EMPLOYMENT OF TIME

The weather is now, comparatively speaking, delightful; the thermometer is 76° in the middle of the day, and about 66° at sunrise and early in the morning. I assure you we find it quite chilly, and are obliged to walk very fast to get warm. Our hours are now – up at six, feed the fowls, and walk till eight; bathe and dress till nine, then breakfast; write, read, and work till four, then dinner; feed the fowls and walk till half-past six; tea at seven. My wife works and I read aloud till half-past eight; backgammon or cribbage till half-past nine; then prayers, and to bed. Sometimes, however, I have to go out and see my parishioners between breakfast and dinner, and then I go in my palanquin. One great disagreeable is, the constant change of people.

The regiment that was here, of which the Major and his wife were our chief friends, has just been ordered away, and a new one is come in its place. The Captain of Engineers has just offered to take us a trip to the mountains, fifty miles off, on elephants. I do not know yet whether we shall go or not. The historical name of my parish would be, the Ooriah district, or the Oresta. Our time is six hours earlier than in England.

## Midnapore, December 13, 1842

### DEPARTURE FOR CUTTACK

I am on the point of quitting this place for Cuttack. I have sold the greater part of my furniture, as it is expensive to move; the remainder is going forward on hackeries, or native carts. I want six of these carts; about a dozen of them are come, and there is now a crowd of native savages round the door, disputing as to who shall go; and they were making so much noise that I was compelled to go out and stop the cabal. I took a good thick stick in my hand, as if I were about to beat them. I called out "Choop!" (or silence) as loud as I could. I then explained that I only wanted six hackeries. Then began a vociferation as to whose were the best. "Choop! – will ye choop?" I roared again. I then called the mollee, and desired him to turn out all the bullocks, for they had unfastened those which drew the carts, and let them all loose in the rice-ground in the compound, which was just ready for cutting. This order I halloed out loud enough for the men to hear; and told him, as soon as he had done that, to come to me for a crowbar to break to pieces all the hackeries but six. This made them submit; and although they still continued making a great chattering, yet they soon began harnessing their bullocks. With these people we are obliged to appear very severe. They despise us as being of no caste; and were we not to be firm, they would imagine we were afraid of them.

We are now engaged in packing up our things, and shall start on the 25th, reach Balasore on the 28th, and remain there ten days, and then three days' more travelling will bring me to my headquarters at Cuttack.

I have, with much trouble, endeavoured to persuade the people here that they ought to build a church: the Mohammedans have a splendid mosque, the Hindoos have a large temple, and yet we have no consecrated building for the worship of the true God; but, however, I hope this will be remedied. As I was passing the mosque the other day, I saw the muezzin shouting out that it was time for prayer, and stopping his ears with both hands, that he might not hear the terrible noise which he himself was making.

### GOATS

About a fortnight ago the judge went out shooting: he came to a large hole under the root of a tree, and heard a loud growling. He is a courageous man, so he was not afraid; but he told an Indian, who was with him, to get behind the tree, and then poke a long stick into the hole. Presently the growling became very loud and savage, and then out jumped an enormous bear, one of the most savage sort – the large black bear. The judge was ready, and shot it when it came out. On examining the hole, three young bears, only a few days old, were found. He sent for some Indians, who carried the dead body, and also the cubs, home, and then, as he knew that I was fond of animals, he sent the three little ones to me. They are very ugly, and cannot see yet. One of my goats had just had a kid, so I told the cook to make the kid into soup, and I brought the goat to the young bears. One man held the goat, another covered her eyes with his hands, and a boy held up the cubs to suck. The goat did not like it at all at first, but now she is quite contented, almost as much so as if they were her own young ones. I have given two of them away. In England you never taste goat's milk: it is most delicious; far better, I think, than cow's milk: we use it every day. Each goat, after the kid is taken from her, gives about three-quarters of a pint a-day. The judge has promised me a bottle full of the pure bear's grease.

Every one here knows that I am very fond of animals, and they are all very kind in sending them to me. I received the other day from a gentleman a present of a goat, which is quite as big as

a small pony. If I were to get on its back my feet would not touch the ground; it is of a dark brown, and of the long-eared Thibet kind.

## **December 14**

### **BIRDS'-NESTS**

I went out to tea last evening, and a lady gave me two nests made of platted grass, into which the birds enter through a hole at the bottom. They are about a yard long, and they hang swinging from the branch of a tree to which they are fastened. They are built in this form, in order to keep out the violent rains, and to preserve the birds from the monkeys.

### **COST OF DRESS**

The commonest articles of dress in Calcutta are at least three times as dear as they are in England. I bought a silk hat which would have cost five shillings at home, and paid fourteen rupees for it here; and some ribbon, which would have been threepence a-yard in England, cost a rupee and a half here. Then on the other hand many things are cheaper.

There has been no rain for two months, nor a cloud until the last day or two; now the clouds will continue to increase for a week, and then we shall have three days of rain, after that no more till the middle of June, except about three tremendous thunderstorms in April and May. The weather is now delightful: the thermometer varies from 60° to 80°; but I am glad of cloth clothes, and at night we have three blankets and a heavy counterpane. At this time of the year we have peas, beans, &c., and every one looks happy and cheerful, not healthy, for Europeans are all of a deadly white, and most of them exceedingly fat.

## December 16

I was walking in the compound yesterday, and I saw something black, shaped very much like a small lobster, except that it had a pointed tail; and as soon as I went near it it turned its tail over its head and tried to sting me. I managed to get him into a bottle, which I filled with spirits.

The mongoose is very fond of serpents; he kills and eats them with great rapidity, and then jumps into my wife's lap to ask for some milk.

## **Balasore, Orissa, December 30, 1842**

The ancient house in which I live here is situated, like the rest of Balasore, on a large flat plain, extending north, south, and west, as far as I can see. The vegetation is scanty, and the trees are small. But turn towards the east and the eye is arrested by a most magnificent sight. At the distance of about seven miles rises quite abruptly from the plain a splendid range of volcanic hills, about two thousand feet in height. Judging from their appearance at this distance, they must be composed of reddish lava without any grass, but here and there a stumpy bush. I never saw anything to compare with them before. In England our hills are always rounded at the top; but here there are points and peaks and edges, as if you had been trying to cut a piece of paper in zigzag lines.

About fifteen miles beyond these great hills tower a still loftier range, lifting their deep-blue summits seven thousand feet into the clouds, and forming a background for the nearer and better-defined range.

On Monday we start with a picnic party and tents, &c., to explore these hills. We shall probably be out on our expedition for three or four days.

### **HILL OF THE LARGE WHITE ANT**

After standing gazing at these magnificent hills, I walked towards what appeared to be the remains of some mud hut: it was about five feet high, and in irregular blunt points at the top. When I came down to it I tried to break off one of the long bits, but it was too strong, and was as hard as a wall. However, on the other side I found a smaller projection, which I broke off by kicking against it, and found it full of round passages perforating it in all directions, the smallest about the size of a quill, the largest as big as my wrist. This was the large white ants' hill. Immediately after I had broken a portion of it there came a rush of the inhabitants from all the passages to see what was the matter. They examined the parts broken, and then some of them ran back. Presently a number more came, some dragging forward the others until they got them quite to the edge, when a bigger ant took hold of each of these prisoners and bit him in the neck until he killed him. I suppose the prisoners were those who had been on guard at that spot, or else those who built that part, and so were punished for my fault. Soon, however, they turned and attacked me, for I found many of them on my clothes and experienced the smart of their bite.

I now walked forward, and the next thing I came to was a human skull. In this part of the country wood is scarce, and therefore, when any poor person dies, instead of burning his body, they wait till evening, and then throw it out of doors, and by the next morning the jackals and vultures have picked the bones quite clean, and the ants then destroy all the fibres, whilst the sun bleaches the bones. I have picked up several of these skulls in the last few days; they appear very different from the skull of an European, being smaller, and very much narrower from ear to ear in proportion to the length from the eye to the back of the head; the forehead also retreats much more. Presently I came to two bamboo-trees; between them on the ground was a pair of doves, much smaller than our English ones, and of a bright reddish purple. They were walking about, whilst out of one of the bamboo-trees poked the head of a great snake, who was quietly watching them. I frightened away the doves, as I guessed the long gentleman's intentions. It is of a kind which does not hurt men, of a dirty-brown colour, about seven feet long.

Turning towards the house again, I was struck by the very beautiful plumage of a bird; its wings were striped transversely with black and white; it was about the size of a blackbird, with yellow neck and tail, and a very long head. It alighted on the ground and opened a most beautiful round crest growing fore and aft on its head, the colour of which, like the body, was an orange yellow, but there

was an edging of white and black. It was the hoopoe. The only other striking thing I saw was a great vulture, with its naked red head and its tattered-looking feathers, puffing away at the top of our house, having most likely stuffed with human flesh till he could hardly move; and when I threw a stone at him, he hopped a little way along the roof and grunted.

## January 2, 1843

### NATIVE LEGEND

Yesterday was New Year's day. I have just heard the origin of these hills, and will put it down while I remember it. The story is from one of the natives here.

"Many, many years ago there lived a giant in Ceylon, and this giant fell in love with the daughter of another giant at Lucknow, in Bengal, so he asked her father to let him marry her. But he said No, as the other lived in a little island, and was no real gentleman at all. Upon this Master Ceylon determined that, as her father said No, he would take her without leave, and off he started, seized the young lady, put her on his shoulders, and carried her across to Ceylon. But when the papa found that his daughter was gone, he got into a tremendous rage, and determined to go and punish the Ceyloney. So off he hurried, until he came to the straits which separate the island from the mainland. But when he tried to cross over, he found that he was not quite so tall as the Ceylonese gentleman by a few hundred yards, and that the water was too deep for him. So he stood still, and he scratched his head and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and thought and pondered what he should do to get across and punish the wicked thief. At last an idea struck him, and he trotted back all up India until he reached the Himalaya mountains, and, snatching up two of the largest of them, one in each hand, threw them into the straits, and thus made them shallow enough for him to pass over. But as he went along some of the rocks and earth slipped through his fingers, for you may suppose his hands were rather full; and the chains of hills which extend from Balasore for nearly three hundred miles are the pieces which he dropped as he went along." The tale does not inform us whether the giant's daughter was restored to him.

### NESTS OF WHITE ANTS

I have not been up the hills to-day, because some of the party were frightened at the number of bears and tigers which are said to be there; but I am in hopes we shall go in a few days. I have been looking about me a good deal lately, and have noticed one very curious thing. The ground for five or six miles from our house in one direction seems to be covered with mounds of earth and small bushes; on examining these closely, however, I find they are all the nests of white ants. The green ones are those that are deserted, and over which the grass has grown – the others are still inhabited. In the plain visible from my window there must be many hundreds of thousands of these hills, varying in height from three feet to ten or twelve, and many of them six feet in diameter; and all of these are formed by little insects no larger than the common English ant. One part of their manner of building is most extraordinary: their nests are always completely covered in, so that without kicking them you cannot see a single ant inside; there are one or two doors in different parts of the building, but they are seldom used.

Their mode of building is as follows: – One day, perhaps, you will perceive a single pinnacle of an ants' nest. You go and see it one day, and you find it slightly raised, but curved, like a headstone. So it increases daily until it reaches the size I have described. It is like a man building a house – as if he made a little closet with a roof on it, and then went inside and stayed there, while the closet swelled and swelled until it became a perfect house. At the foot of these ant-hills are a number of large black ants on the watch for any straggling white ants, which they kill and eat. These creatures abound in all our houses, and run about the floors: they are about an inch in length, and bite, but do not sting.

## January 3

### MODE OF TRAVELLING

I ought to give you some account of our voyage to this place. We quitted Midnapore, after a hard week's packing, at nine o'clock on Tuesday evening, December 27th. On the Monday we went to dine and sleep at the house of the Captain of Engineers, because our own was in such a condition from packing; and after dinner on Tuesday at nine o'clock we entered our horrible palanquin. I flatter myself that most of the people at Midnapore were very sorry when we left. We had sixteen men to carry us, two mussalchees, or men who carry mussals (torches made of long strips of cotton bound tightly together and dipped in oil), and two banghy-bearers, to carry each two tin boxes with our clothes in them.

We soon got clear of the station of Midnapore, and then the scene became most wild and romantic – a narrow road, bounded on each side by an interminable jungle, or plain covered with low bushes so thickly matted together as to afford only passage to the deadly cobra, the snarling jackal, and the ravenous tiger. On the road our own palanquins, one a hundred yards in front of the other, carried by black men with merely a cloth round their loins, the red glaring torches showing the others who ran swiftly by their side, the banghy-bearers trying to keep up with us, and all keeping up a loud monotonous sing-song tune, which was varied occasionally by the shrill cry of the jackal, the grinning snarl of the hyæna, or in the distance the deeper roar of the tiger in search of his prey – and yet in the midst of all this we both slept well, awakened only occasionally by the plashing of the men through the fords of the river or the stopping at a village to change bearers.

### JELASORE

In the latter case we were not detained an instant, the fresh relays being in attendance with as much patience and regularity as if they were horses waiting for a coach. Thus we travelled on without interruption until we reached Danton, called Dantoon. This was about nine o'clock in the morning. At this place there is a dâk-bungalow – that is, a bungalow, or thatched house, built by Government for the accommodation of travellers. In Turkey it would be called a caravanserai. Here there is a man with fire and water, but the traveller brings his own provisions, wine, tea, bread, &c., in his palanquin, though he can generally get eggs. We stayed here about two hours, and had some tea, eggs, and biscuits, and no one who has not experienced it can have any idea of the comfort of a short rest after a night of dâk travelling. Although you lie down in the palanquin, yet every limb gets cramped, and the incessant jolting is most painful to the bones, even of one so fat as I am, and I have increased sadly in bulk since I came to India. Off we started again a little before eleven, and at about one we reached the house of an Indigo-planter at Jelasore. I never saw him before, but he received us most hospitably. His wife was rejoiced to see us – she had not seen a European lady for seventeen months, for their nearest neighbours live at a distance of forty miles, or about twelve hours' journey. Here we spent a most agreeable day, delighted with everything. In the evening I took a walk with our kind host to see an old fort.

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