

Calcutta

Feb. 3 25<sup>th</sup>. / 90

My dear Pippa

I never heard such a fearful tale of horrors as the adventures of the Malabar, everything seems to have combined against her.

It is getting rather unpleasantly warm here now and people are beginning to think about punkahs.

Last ~~Friday~~ Tuesday we started off in a special train to see some collieries at a place called Girideh about 200 miles up the line. The party consisted of papa & Mr Campbell (who acts the part of Boswell

Mr C. Elliott

Mr Robertson & I. About halfway there we met Sir A. Rendel & Co who had gone up before to inspect a new line, the one Max Bowen is on. This youth came on with us to Girdah. When we got there at about 9 P.M. papa & I were driven off to the house of Dr. Sarge who is the manager of the coalmine. It might appear that we got the best of it as the other people had to sleep in the carriages, but instead of beds to sleep on we were given gridirons with no mattress. This was not kind was it? At an early hour next morning we started off to see the place. The coalmine is a very big one & the seam of coal is 22 feet thick. It looked very "wired" in the light of torches made of rags soaked in oil. There

is a school for the children of natives employed in the mine & we went in to see it. When we went in they were doing arithmetic. One small wretch not much bigger than Jimbo was put in front and told to do '14 times'. He at once rattled it off with the ease that I could do 'twice 1 & 2' &c. and the whole school shouted it out after him. They teach them up to 20 x 20! After 'doing' the mine we went back and had a welcome breakfast & then started ~~on~~ <sup>back</sup> ~~the~~ ~~mine~~ & got to Calcutta in time for bed. I am getting quite accustomed to eating magnificent dinners in the train as all grandees have kitchens attached to their carriages and cook their victuals as they go along. When I am not

going around with papa & I go every day to the office here & do 'strains' i.e. Calculations about bridges. Last Saturday papa went to Barrackpore ~~on a~~ which is about 15 miles up the Hooghly on a visit to the Viceroy, & came back on Monday morning. At Barrackpore is a house called Flagstaff House where papa & mamma spent their honeymoon! On Sunday I went with the Elliots to the Botanical Gardens a little way ~~to~~ <sup>down</sup> the river in a steam launch. They are very pretty. We are going to dinner tonight to Sir Stewart Bayley the Lieutenant Governor who lives at a place called Belvidere so called because Sir Richard Temple lived there once. On Sunday we shall start on our travels again and go right up to Delhi from where

papa will go to Bombay. Sir Alexander is now at Madras where he went to inspect <sup>the</sup> harbour. It takes three days to get there in a ship, but if he can't catch one he will have to come back by train which will take 5 days.

The wretched writing of this letter is caused by the vile quill pens of the office so please excuse.

I have got to go to a fearful garden party at Gov. House so I must stop.

Love to everybody from  
 yr loving brother

Ralph Strachey

P.S. That (my) diary not yet begun.