

Calcutta. Nov 3rd / 76

Mamma

Dear Mamma
I am writing
your daughter
Elizabeth

I shall begin my letter in better time this week. Last week I was very busy and put it off until the last day and then people came in and things had to be attended to, and I was not able to say as much as I wished. On Monday of that week we were dining at the Fort, on Tuesday we had company at home, Wednesday Miss Biddulph came at nine and spent the day until four when I went to Miss Leonard's, on Friday Mrs Dodd and her sister came to tiffin. Between whiles I was preparing and doing up my things ready for church on Sunday for our car to rise to the occasion, was that all the big people are coming down from the hills. I have rigged myself out for the winter without spending a penny. I mean to make my things last, if possible, until I come home. For English clothing is so expensive here. So are English eatables. We pay 3/- a pound for cheese which at home would be not more than 11d. 2/6 for bacon 1/6 for little tins of jam; more than double the price for wine and all.

All creature produce is very cheap & I do not know how we should do. I wish you would buy nine fowls, as we do, at 6 and 8 each legs of mutton at 1/3, and eggs at 1/6 the dozen. Then we are expected to provide our servants with warm clothing every second year. This year we have to spend about £5 in this way. On Wednesday I went to a little feast which good Mrs Dally, the church clerk's wife, gives every year on All Saints day, to the poor widows belonging to the church. She led them to dinner in her verandah, ten of them, and provided curry and rice, roast beef, and sage pudding, with tea afterwards. The women are all East Indians, some of them almost natives, and they have not dropped their native habits in becoming Christians. They eat with their fingers, the first time I have seen it done, but they certainly do it very cleverly, without any dropping about, and then they wash their hands afterwards. None of them speak English. I was very much amused with one shrivelled toothless old woman who got up and salaamed to me and then seemed to be praying. I asked Mrs Dally what it meant, and found she was invoking the blessing of the Almighty upon me, and asking that I

might have "many sons", a prayer to which I certainly could not say amen though I appreciated the old women's kindness all the same. People attach great value to sons here, but daughters are of no account. Every bit of food that was left was given away afterwards to the women for their families. Mrs Dally said if this had not been done, they would have said that she made a feast for the poor, and then helped herself. There is a curious suspiciousness about these people, and I fancy not much gratitude, in a general way, though we have certainly found some pleasant exceptions.

Saturday yesterday Mr Harrison and Mr Robinson came at five to play Badminton whilst they were here. Mrs Williams, son, & Mr Morrison and Major Campbell came too and had tea. The two first staid dinner, and then went with John to the church conference. This morning I went to the dinner's table at half past seven and brought Mrs Williamson back with me to spend the day, as her husband is away. She is writing her home letters whilst I write mine. Tomorrow Mr Knox comes to breakfast, Dr Spry and Mr Robbards to dinner. On Tuesday Dr Jameson Mrs Dall Mr Knox, Captain & Mrs Broadbent & Miss Macintyre come to play lawn tennis and they all stay to dinner. So you see we

do not forget the apostolic duty of hospitality
though it is in quite a plain way. But
I sometimes wish we could have a week
or two quite to ourselves, for I get tired
of seeing and talking to so many people.
It is such a different life from the one
I have always been accustomed to.

Mrs. Williamson is very nice and quiet.
Nearly all the people have returned from
the hills now, but I have seen very few
of them, for they are in the throes of house-
cleaning and arrangement after their
long absence. Mrs. Bell has asked us to
go and see her at Benares, and I hope
we shall be able to do so. I have a great
wish to see that place. It is Hinduism
simple and perfect. When I have seen
Benares, Delhi and the hills, I shall
not want to see anything else in this
country. Like you, I tell you much of
my affairs, and do not make much
reference to your letters, but as you say
I like to hear all of the home news that
you can tell me and I take it for
granted that you like to hear all about
ours. I have not your letter yet, for the
mail is late this week. It is very pro-
voking when it comes in just as our
letters have come. John sends his love to
you and Mary Catharine. We are both very
well now, or I should rather say in our
usual health. I am writing to Aunt

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