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Emily Eden Edited by Eleanor Eden  
Excerpt  
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## LETTERS FROM INDIA.



TO THE HON. AND REV. ROBERT EDEN.

Government House, April 12, 1837.

MY DEAREST ROBERT,—Think of your overland letters of February 1, with papers of February 3, arriving to-day, April 12—only two months and a week. To be sure, that overland business is a lottery, but when it does come up a prize, it is worth all the hazard, but it takes quite a bewildering effect on one's mind. We have had in the last *five days* letters by sea of September and October up to October 24. That is, in fact, where we have left off all the real and complete details of home. Then yesterday there came by a *sailing* vessel the overland letters of September, October, and November 24.

You cannot think how we rummage about

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the letters, and pick out a stitch here and put in a patch there, and bring dates and hints together, and make out a story of a life for you all. I dare say not at all the true one, but still it sounds so to us, and it does very well. Now you can't do that for us; you can't put the scenery to us, nor the right faces to the people just now. I have not been well for five days; supposed to have caught cold by sitting in front of a *tattee*—the first day of the tattees, and the bheesties wetted it so well, that I caught my death by it. Now you don't see the scene, with the thatched windows and the black gentlemen without clothing splashing water all over them.

Ever yours affectionately,

E. E.

THE HON. F. H. EDEN TO A FRIEND.

Barrackpore, April 14, 1837.

MY DEAREST —,—This is the hopeless experiment we all weakly make of sending letters overland, but I am not going to say much to you, because I am just sending you off a regular book of a letter by sea, the sort of thing you will never get through; but then 'it shows my devotion.' I am also sending you, at

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last, those herons' feathers. They came to me, as you will see, in two round ostentatious cases. I grumbled over them for a week, because I think they look rather like crows' feathers fainted away. However, when I was ejaculating over them, and showing them to Emily, sneering a great deal at clever —, and a great deal at you for thinking those could be what you wanted, his jemadars made a dart at them, expressed many Eastern signs of admiration and astonishment, and said that except Runjeet Singh nobody ever had such. From which I judge that you and he must be very much alike in your ways. Lady William Bentinck had some, and wore them with a turban and a diamond; the jemadars evidently thought it was a grand moment for her, and said, 'I suppose it only Lady Bentinck who wear these in England.' In the meantime I do not know their price, but I should think not above 500,000 rupees; of course, no object to you. Perhaps they may be less; indeed, I have a notion that Major — mentioned fifty rupees as their probable price. I will honestly let you know. I have put in some black feathers with a white stripe. You need have no scruple about letting

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me give you them; they are like those the natives wear in their turbans at the Mohurram festival, with silver tassels at the end of each feather to make them droop. Runjeet and Lady L——, your two congenial souls, would put diamonds, and you owe it to them to do the same thing.

Talking of Runjeet, the man has been marrying his heir to his niece, and anything like the splendour of the proceedings I have never heard of. 300,000 people followed the procession, and he gave a rupee to each. He had all his troops manœuvred before Sir H. Fane and there were 5,000 chiefs, all in different armour—some in splendid chain armour; and, as they galloped by, they all threw rupees on a particular spot on a carpet. The bride's dowry was eleven elephants richly caparisoned—that is, with quantities of jewels, 101 camels, and so on, besides shawls and jewels without end.

Runjeet was told that we were very sorry this marriage did not take place next year, when we should be up the country, and he sent word that every fête should be repeated if we would promise to come. The fêtes lasted a

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fortnight, and have cost more lacs of rupees than I dare tell you. I fancy he is a great man. I wonder he does not turn us all out of the country. It turns out, too, that he is quite a chicken—only fifty-two years old.

Yours most affectionately,  
F. H. EDEN.

THE HON. E. EDEN TO A FRIEND.

April 28, 1837.

Before I forget, I may as well mention that I do not think it *would* answer to buy a set of trinkets here. They say when we are up at Delhi we shall be more tempted by jewellery, but here I am come out of my *engouement* for native jewellery. It is so difficult to get it well executed, and it wants the finish of English and French jewellery. Turquoises are cheap, and most unset stones are cheaper than in England, and I think for ladies who have plenty of trinkets, some Indian jewellery is a very good addition, but it would not answer for people with a small stock. The gold is so excessively pure, that it is an excellent *investment*, and you can sell your bracelet or comb, when tired of it,

for almost its original cost ; still you get much less show for the money than with a larger supply of trinkets in English jeweller's gold. And then the natives have not learnt that new knack of making a necklace turn by manifold clasps into a *brooch* and *sevigné* and bracelets, which is useful in a small way. — has written to me for a comb, which is exactly the very thing the natives can do in perfection ; but then I must catch a jeweller, and he is brought to Government House, and our sircar buys the turquoises, and weighs the gold, and sits by and *tanges* the man at his work, and, as it is a simple, plain, straightforward comb, it will be very well done and worth its weight in gold ; but a *set* of ornaments I should be afraid to undertake here. If very much tempted at Delhi, Mr. — must never be surprised if I *grab* at a pair of bangles for the girls. I mean he must always keep his fortune in that sort of state, that a sudden call for 10*l.* may not prove a serious inconvenience. There may even be a run on the bank for 12*l.*, and so he must be ready. I shall be grieved if a terrible smash—the great panic of 1838—could be traced back to my Delhi extravagance.

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Wednesday, April 29.

The 'Belle Alliance,' like a dear as she is, came in on Monday with quantities of letters—a nice long one from you.

We had a dinner for the Bishop on Monday, and he is as jolly as anyone I ever met, and likes a joke. I do not wonder people all exclaim at the coolness of Government House, and indeed profess to catch cold there. The heat of the few houses we have been in is almost stifling.

Friday, April 31.

I saw the French manager on Wednesday, and settled to have a French play at our little theatre, which always stands primed for acting in the ball-room on the third storey.

Wednesday, May 3.

George went down to Calcutta on Monday morning, and did the great dinner there by himself, as Fanny is always glad of an excuse to stay at Barrackpore, and we have put off our play till next week. We have had two beautiful thunderstorms, and the weather is not at all hot, comparatively speaking.

Saturday, May 6.

George came back early on Thursday, time enough for me to take my first airing with him. The park looks so green and fresh ; it would be a nice place in England, where one could go out in daylight. The birds affect a little singing at this time of the year, a wretched confused *ramage*, without any keynote, and incoherent to the last degree, but still the attempt is commendable and spring-like ; and there is a cuckoo who at this season tries to talk : he says Cuck—and can't say Coo. However, he is very good to speak any English.

The bachelors of Barrackpore gave a ball last night, and we lent them the Flagstaff Bungalow, thinking we should be at Calcutta, but, as we have been kept here, George thought it would be civil to go.

I never mentioned that the 'Catherine' at last came in on Thursday with quantities more letters. I do not think it signifies the least the letters coming out of their turns ; we read them just as much, and it is surprising how *unlike* they are to each other, considering that you are all writing about the same events ; but the little bits of private family history always tell



best, and the more you write to the day the more real the letters seem. It is very odd what extraordinary interest those few scratches of a black liquid on a white pulp can give, because the same number of words said in conversation would go a very little way ; and yet one folds up a letter with an air of pompous satisfaction, and says, ‘ Ah ! it is very comfortable to know all they have been about ’—a deception, only I do not mean to see through it.

Monday.

There is a good story they have also got in the papers. The privates of the Cameronian Regiment acted a play last week (remarkably well, they say), and offered the proceeds to the European Orphan Asylum ; the children there are soldiers’ orphans. The paper was circulated to the ladies of the committee, and Fanny and I, and a majority of the ladies, put our names to a resolution that we accepted their contribution with thanks, &c. While we were at Barrackpore two ladies re-circulated the paper (which is against all the rules of the establishment), and they and some others drew

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up some very absurd resolutions—that no establishment could expect the blessing of Providence that received contributions earned in this unchristian manner ; that if the orphans (a remarkably naughty set of spoiled girls) knew such subscriptions were received, it would hurt their feelings and their principles ; and they ended by refusing 640 rupees—a great help to the school, and which these poor men have earned in the most respectable manner. We saw all this in the paper, but did not believe it until it was confirmed, and now George is vexed about it, and half the military people are threatening to withdraw their subscriptions.

We had a great dinner to-day, but I have not begun to dine down yet.

Wednesday.

The Asylum question rages, and, as ——— says, it is lucky we can all make so much excitement out of it. We got back the committee paper to-day, and George drew up an excellent protest, which Fanny and I have signed, and transmitted to the other ladies.

We had our French play in the evening—two