

# LETTERS FROM INDIA

BY

THE HON. EMILY EDEN

Author of

'*The Country*' 'Semi-Detached House'  
&c.

EDITED BY HER NIECE

IN TWO VOLUMES .

VOL. I.



LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty

1872

## TO A FRIEND.

Government House, February 11, 1837.

I see in the papers that the 'Java' letter-bag closes to-night, and, though I have particularly nothing to say, and never heard of, or saw the 'Java' in the river, still if she *will* close her letter-bag to-night, I suppose she would like to have something to put into it.

This is our levee day, so I shall write till the people begin to pour in, and after that the sooner I am hanged and put out of my pain, or *luncheoned* and brought to life again, the better. Not that I expect an immense crowd to-day, as it is the season that people are leaving Calcutta instead of coming into it. It is the new arrivals who bother me entirely.

A shocking catastrophe occurred last week at Barrackpore in the canine department, but there are hopes it may not end fatally. A jackal got hold of little Fairy, ——'s pretty little greyhound, and worried her in a horrid manner. —— and all the other gentlemen settle themselves on the lawn at Barrackpore after we go to bed for an hour's smoking, and

they generally get into violent political arguments; so on Friday evening they had set in to their smoking—eight of them, and a row of servants round them, and about twenty jackals again beyond them. Fairy had only jumped off ——'s knee one moment before they heard a little shriek, which they took to be a cat screaming; and then they heard another noise, and one of the Hurkarus saw a jackal carrying off Fairy by the throat; so then they all ran and frightened the beast away, and Fairy was picked up with her throat and paws shockingly torn, and apparently so dead that —— told one of the men to bury her. But after the man carried her off she showed signs of life, and her funeral was countermanded, and now she has been nursed and petted for a week, and is getting better. She screamed and howled terribly for two days, and, as dogs that have been bitten by jackals generally go mad, it has been necessary to keep her in a large cage; but I think now she will recover. There are sometimes fifty jackals at a time round the house at Barrackpore, and I assure you, my dear ——, that I have not a moment's peace about the Prince Royal, only I think his

natural dignity and his imperious manner may keep the jackals in awe; also his servant is rather grand, particularly in the cold weather, when he wears a nice Indian shawl draped over him in a very becoming way. Dr. Drummond's little dog has been carried off twice and recovered. We have all sorts of little adventures of that kind. One of the rhinoceroses has taken to stray about the park, and ran after an old neighbour of ours when he was going home one evening, and he is not only very angry (naturally) that the rhinoceros should have run after him, but also that George should have laughed when he made his complaint, and not only that, but everybody else laughs when they think of this great heavy beast scuttling after old Mr. ——. I quite agree with him in thinking it no laughing matter.

February 12.

There! we had a quantity of people, and in the afternoon it was so hot that I could not write; in fact, I went to sleep, and we dined early to go to the play. A Mrs. Chester, from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and also from

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

Barrackpore, May 22, 1837.

Didn't I get your No. 7 last week? Have I not got your No. 8 this week? And don't I mean to have your No. 9 next? There is some sense when letters come in that way; it looks almost as if the sea were beginning to listen to reason. We have had heaps of letters during the last fortnight—none of a later date than the middle of January—but there is a quantity of wind just now, and evidently blowing straight from England. You all write in the same odd, dreamy way about some white, cold substance which falls from the sky and cuts up your communication with each other—the tops of Twelfth cakes probably, and very tiresome and sticky it must be.

I always write to you when I am here, because, though all the windows and blinds are shut, and the house, in fact, full of people, there is a false air of liberty and solitude about it, which is exhilarating. The only civility we can show our female guests is to beg them to have *tiffin* sent to their bungalows, because it must be so unpleasant to cross in the sun; and

generally they most heartily accept it; so from breakfast to dinner we see nothing of them. Then we do contrive to get out half an hour earlier here than at Calcutta; and there never was anything like the green of the park and the beauty of the river just now. The school is finished—really a beautiful building. And we have a most clever native schoolmaster. In two months he has taught his two first classes to read English, and answer English questions, quite wonderfully; and, indeed, all the little black boys in the village show their vocation for study by running after the carriage by moonlight and calling out ‘Good morning, sir!’ The menagerie is flourishing too, though the young tiger showed a young fancy for a young child, and is shut up in consequence; and the little bear gave a little claw at a little officer, and is shut up too; and the large white monkey, which *was* shut up, got out, walked into the coachman’s bungalow, and bit a little boy’s ear; and the three sloths have been taking a lively turn, which is horrid and supernatural; and his ‘Excellency’ has got an odd twist upon the subject of the rhinoceroses, and connives at their fence not being mended,

so that they may roam about the park, whereby a respectable elderly gentleman, given to dining out at the cantonments, has been twice nearly frightened into fits. The story, now twice repeated, of the two beasts roaring as they pursue his buggy is very moving to hear; and his 'Excellency' smiles complacently and says, 'Yes, they are fine beasts and not the least vicious.'

Chance lives and flourishes, and passes much time in the water, and has quite a travelled mind. Gazelle is lying on his shawl, with three small baskets before him, filled respectively with rice, leaves, and grass, and is growing rather tall.

Believe me, yours most affectionately,

F. H. EDEN.

FROM THE HON E. EDEN TO THE COUNTESS OF  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Government House, May 24, 1837.

MY DEAREST SISTER,—It is an immense time, I suspect, since I have written to you, but Fanny was sending you off, first, her journal and then a letter; and we generally divide our correspondents on the liberal principle, that, as we