

## Extracts of Letters discussing the Transportation of Plants

**1802**

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds, July 16, 1802]**

*Page 18:* I have just now heard that the Swallow Packet is going to sail which has been lying here nine months to be ready to sail at 24 hours notice & whether it may now sail in a few hours or be here some months I cannot guess but report says it is to sail & therefore I shall pack off this to acknowledge the receipt [sic] of a letter from you & one from Hetty written from Tupsley Jan: 14<sup>th</sup>: 1802. Mr. G. had a few letters on business & from some friends but not one from any relation of his. I expected a box of preserves and a box from Mr: James because Mr: Temples father said he had Inclosed for his son some books in a parcel going to be sent by Mr: James which I expected wou'd be with some gowns caps &c &c &c Mr: Ware wrote to Mr: G. that he had sent us some porter but does not say how directed. We have received none of these things & all the ships are come in for the season except one which is not expected till August or Sep[tember]: - The ships destined for China & Bengal have sailed [sic] from this place & we have made enquiry without effect the letters not mentioning what has been sent - I fear our things are gone (19) to China by which means they will be lost or go back to England. But one of the Mates of the United Kingdom who dined with us tells us he thinks it likely the boxes are still in England as unless some person delivers them & takes a receipt [sic] from the officers they are frequently left in the Warehouses -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, August 23, 1802]**

*Page 1:* A letter which I lost an opportunity (2) of sending some months ago, & at the time little regretted has been kept by me till a few days ago there having been in all that time no opportunity of sending to England.- I sent it to take the first chance & I find it has been put on Board a Hamborough\* ship by which I fear it may cost more than it is worth but as it may arrive after a long interval you may be not sorry to have it as I have added to it a later part with a short account of our goings on at present. The ship I intended it to go by does not go at all after 9 months delay. In short I have been so often disappointed in sending letters & we have so often lost chances by waiting for what were esteemed certainties that I shall never again presume to promise myself when a letter may go.- This is intended to take a chance only & will not, for that reason be long. - I sent by the [word crossed out] Monarch in March last by favour of the surgeon two pieces of Muslin a shawl & some pieces, seeds &c which I hope you will receive in August or Sep[tember] I expected many opportunities before this but they have all failed [sic]-

\*Likely Hambrough or Hamburg

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, October 18, 1802]**

*Page 3:* -we send by Mr: Templar a jar of Preserved Nutmegs for you & two jars of Ginger done at home but I am not sure you will ever (4) have them for the jars were all over set in the surf of the Sea & some I understand broke. - I sent with the jars some for Mr: Templar's use. two pots

with trees for Mr: Whitley & some seeds but I find the pots were broke & I fear the trees destroyed & the Sea water has possibly spoiled [sic] the seeds - Mr: Templar promised me he wou'd try at the Cape to get some seeds & wou'd add to those I sent which were but few. -

## **1803**

### **[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, February 1803]**

*Page 1:* I have a basket of seeds from Mr. Whitely which appear to be very good they are sown in all ways & places. I shall (2) write particulars to Lizzy, but I mention this as it is possible I may not have time to write by this ship to them. - I have been frequently disappointed by the ships sailling [sic] in a hurry — the moment the Government dispatches are put on board, they hurry them off. — I had a long & valuable letter from Lizzy, & Polly one from Mary, they gave me infinite pleasure as they contained news on the subjects I am most of all interested about. — The chief of the contents was of your history, & the state of the garden, which I like to hear of

*Page 6:* The seeds (the letter excepted) were the only part of the things I was very anxious about & seeds ought to be here before Xmas, or else they are too late to sow- our rains are in Nov:r therefor Dec: & Jan:y are to us what June & July are to you. In these months we eat peas & french beans, Cabbages, carrots, turnips, lettuces of all kinds in perfection -as to fruits; the oranges are here in high perfection at this time Dec:r Jan:y & Feb: being the season of oranges of every description- for we have various kinds tho' none I think, better than yours.-

### **[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, May 7, 1803]**

*Page 1:* My dear Hetty, May 7th: The ship is to sail tomorrow & the wind has been so high that Richard to his great mortification has not been able to go over the surf - nobody has been to or from the ships these two days - To go to a ship is his greatest pleasure & he has risen at 4 oClock these two morn: to go down to the seaside but cou'd not go - I have given Mr: Prosser a great many things to carry which he has promised to do Mr: William Cam gave him a letter he is a near relation of Mr: Harley's Powel. he has desired me to send the things & makes no doubt If he shou'd I shall be much obliged to him & will thank you to shew [sic] him any civilities in your power - Greater part of Mr: Whitleys trees are on board but a few are yet here they have travelled twice to the Beach in the Bullock Cart

The surf is tremendous. - I suppose I shall get them sent let them know as soon as you hear this ship is come - your's affectionately EGwillim"

### **[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, August 14/15, 1803]**

*Page 7:* - But above all things the herbs you sent me are most agreeable & have been the occasion of my eating many hearty meals that I shou'd have gone without this hot (7) weather. I was almost longing for some knotted Marjorem [sic] & if you had desired to favour me ever so much you cou'd not have given me such a treasure - The Marjoram retains its flavour so well as if it was just picked but the ~~thyme~~ Thyme has scarcely any taste but that need not prevent you from

sending both lemon & orange Thyme another time for it may be accident however the sage loses its flavour so much that we are obliged to put a handful into a duck what flavour it retains puts us in mind of home; whereas the sage that grows here is the tree sage & has a very different taste. All the Herb seeds Mr: Whitley sent me I have tried in all ways & given them to other people but I never cou'd get one to grow nor ever hear of one that did however I do not despair & hope to try again in the Monsoon As for mint - I used to have great difficulty about but I learned at the mount how to manage it by cutting it down short frequently & now I have as large as your dining room as green as grass thriving in [?] all this land wind & I think it is nearly as well flavoured as in England - Sage & Marjoram & Thyme you will please to send by every opportunity. - as also Parsley seed & red Radish seed. -

*Page 8: Aug 13th:* I took the pains to write so far but the ship cou'd not sail as we are still in uncertainty of Peace or War - The Calcutta & the Wexford came in by which I have had some of your letters stating that you had written fully by the other ships which have been seen but are not yet come in we expect them every moment

*Page 9:* I have sent them some seeds by the Captain of the Wellesely an extra ship which takes this to you as they have unexpectedly opened a Packet.

*Page 10:* Our luggage was not in his agreement, as the company gave separate leave for that an unlimited [sic] quantity in the gunroom a dry place but he put our things in the Hold where they were very damp & injured to get that room for himself -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds August 16, 1803]**

*Page 1:* The apprehension of a war has prevented any vessel from leaving this place for near three months - just at a season when we expected to have had opportunities of writing every day. - We have with us at present Mr: Lane of Hereford who is surgeon of the Wexford - which came in about a fortnight ago - It brought me your kind letter which was a great pleasure to me & poor Tom's drawings, which I think very well done. We had besides the pleasure of a letter (2) from Mr: Gwillim Senr: - I am sorry your shawl was lost -

**[From Elizabeth to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, September 3/4/10, 1803]**

*Page 10: Sept: 10th:* The idea that the ships woud [sic] be detained made me discontinue my writing but Lord Clive called yesterday to take leave of us, as he has resolved on going without Convoy & they sail tomorrow - this leaves me but a few moments to add to this. All letters & all communications will now be very uncertain for some time - I hope you will get the things by Mr. Prosser, but I think it likely that the ship may be taken. -- I have no opportunity (11) of sending anything by these ships but I shall send just a basket of seeds by Mrs: Davies. If I keep them they will be spoiled [sic] so I may as well venture When you receive them pray send them directly to Mr Whitley - This Lady goes on account of her health & if she gets better talks of coming back from St. Helena instead of proceeding to England, therefore I cannot send by her the little trifles I have ready -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds October 20-21, 1803]**

*Page 9:* Wars & Rumours of Wars keep us in such a state here that we have had few opportunities of writing & no previous notice. The (10) Packet closed suddenly yesterday by the Union before I had time to send my letter which was all I intended to send as there is greatest reason to suppose she will be taken or if not that her passage will be very tedious - Mary has written to you by it to take the chance her letter was just in time. Today the Packet is opened for a Cartel which will not be taken; but we have only a few hours given us I shall therefore not add much more; but as it will most likely be the last opportunity of writing before the monsoon I cannot let it escape. - Our weather is become pretty mild & pleasant & the monsoon appears to be approaching very fast which is the reason of the ships sailling [sic] so soon -

*Page 11:* It is extremely unfortunate that we had not a letter by all the last ships - I fear now we shall hear nothing 'till February of March. I shall direct this to Hetty as I have only time to write one letter & have no opportunity of sending anything but a few seeds which if they shoud never be delivered will be no worse than lying here for the insects devour everything in spight [sic] of all our care - They are for Mr: Whitly & will be directed to Butterworth's - -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, no date.  
Elizabeth's birthday is 21 April 1803; internal evidence suggests the letter is written spring 1803]**

*Page 1:* The Castle Eden arrived here on 18th: of April & on the 20th: being my birthday Mr: Gwillim's sessions day, & large dinner company day & the day I came to the venerable age of 40 I received for the first time since I left England something [sic] larger than a letter. - The Henry Addington put in at the Cape & put on board the Castle Eden the letter & my box from Mrs. Toussaint & a basket of seeds.

*Page 7:* - I sent besides some seeds for Mr: Whitley & a great number of trees. If he knew how many that he wants are packing up he wou'd grieve to think as I do that most likely none will be alive however Mr: Prosser's extreme good nature in offering to take them is very pleasant & therefore I send those most likely to live but the ship will have to pass the Cape in the depth of winter & most likely all will be washed overboard as Lady Clive's were - Polly has drawn some plants slightly & on that paper I have written some account you will please (8) to give him, the papers marked for him - they are rolled up with some drawings of her's - these drawings of her's she has sent that G. Samuel may see them & if they are of any use she will be glad -

*Page 12:* I wish I knew if it was very troublesome to you to receive all the parcels & I wou'd endeavour to send them to the proper people all these I have mentioned besides some from Richard to his uncle are consigned to your care & I fear I must also order the seeds & Plants for Mr: Whitley to you also probably you will not be troubled with many as I think they are likely enough to die on the road

## **1804**

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds March 7, 1804]**

*Page 4:* but the sending is the worst of the job - seeds or anything of that kind which have no duty we can send but of other things ~~they all~~ (5) every one has enough of his own --

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, August 13, 1804]**

*Page 5:* Pray tell Mr: Whitley that I have sent him a bag of seeds & thank for the seeds I have had out both of which came safe both Dr's. & the Cooks & came at a lucky time of year as we have had a good deal of rain.-

Pray do you pay for the seeds - for I am ignorant & know not whether to thank or not for them - you see I can say nothing of the preserves but that all is good that is left but that is like Mr: Prossers trees very little indeed -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, October 16, 1804]**

*Page 1:* - I know not a soul belonging to these ships that is officers &c but Captain Rees calling here & seeing two boxes of plants lying ready under a tree said he wou'd get the Captain of the David Scott to put them on the Poop - I am glad to accept the offer because there is in one of the boxes a large tree that is above two foot high of the plant which the German Botanical Doctor has called by name & I thought if it could be preserved you woud [sic] like to see it He has sent some sprigs of it to Germany & I wrote the Particulars to Mr: Whitly in the ~~Glory~~ Prince of Wales. We have the greatest fears about that ship for we have heard nothing of her & she had not got into St: Helena long after the rest of the ships had left it --

## **1805**

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, March 6, 1805]**

*Page 2:* in listing what she's send by boat: some dried plants for Dr: Smith, a letter to him & a Plant which Dr: Rottler the Botanist chose to give my name to if it might be accepted - a large box of most curious plants for Mr: Whitley - seeds small boxes with sandal wood trees &c these months of my labour. --

\*See Curtis's Botanical Magazine (1807) 977:

<https://archive.org/details/mobot31753002719588/page/n23/mode/2up>

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds, no date; received in England February 28, 1806]**

*Page 3:* Amongst all the people going home I have nobody by whom I can send much as the ships are so loaded with passengers & officers returning home that I can get nothing carried but I am in hopes that I shall see some of the Bengal ships on (4) [5] their way home.

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, August 24, 1805]**

*Page 2:* Captain Hudson never called upon me during his stay here. He was always considered as a sorry Crab & he made such a favour of carrying my Plants that I almost repented of asking him to do it - I mentioned to Mr: Whitley that I was obliged to say they were for myself for he gave me to understand that he wou'd not carry them for a nurseryman. - A droll man here, who knew him, in order to laugh at me pretended to read a passage from a letter, as 'tho' it were written by one of the Passengers on board his ship from St. Helena the half way place - he stated that the stingy thing had starved all my Plants & would not allow water to keep them alive & that therefore they were all left at S. Helena - this really turned out to be true in the latter case. —

Mr: Nicholls spent what time he cou'd with us; he was always welcome for he was a great favourite of mine on board ship, & he is one of Richard's best beloved of all the sons of the green waves - I feel great obligations to him for the care he took of the seeds, which came in a lucky time & are now young Cabbage plants & if they are not all stolen out of it may become cabbages in my garden -

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, August 27, 1805]**

*Page 14:* — Mr: Livingston sent me a box of seeds with the Catalogues I requested, which I am glad of as they give me much information. - I have been dividing the seeds amongst my friends —

*Page 15:* I have drawn the plant which Dr: Rottler has done me the honour to call after me I hope it may be new - if so you will like to have it hung up Gwillimia Indica This drawing I have given to Dr: Rotller. I have taken great pains to send it home the plant General Trent was so kind as to carry was ~~the~~ I hear alive when he left it in the ship & I hope it got safe but it was a cold time for a plant that requires sun. This was the 4th time I have sent trees of it to England - It is a very sweet flower at least here it has a delicate odour but not strong. It came from Batavia & is there called Sampa Salaca. - which means milk flower - It is very much like a Magnolia Glauca - but seldom opens wide till it is near fading -- I rather think that Dr: Rottler wants this drawing which I have made to be sent to Dr: Smith with the dried specimen - but perhaps he will return it to Mr: Whitley & if he does the drawing is for you. If not I will draw you another the flowers are always larger in the early part of the year but it flowers all the year, - the leaves almost always appear scorched or broken [words crossed out] at the ends unless at the ~~Beginning~~ of top of the branches **(16)** [6] But this I attribute to the strong winds we have at Madras - the air of Batavia & the Eastern Islands is all softness. -

*Page 27:* - Mr: Keene who by Mr: Gwillim's desire is to call upon you carries with him a Packet of dried plants - the drawing I have spoken of & a letter all for Dr: Smith of Norwich - If he brings them to you please to pack it nicely for me & send the whole to Norwich by the coach paying the Carriage. that is if Dr: Smith be there but he is frequently in London & Mr: Whitley cou'd tell you if he is or Mrs: James Clarke can tell you. for Dr: Smith's Brother Married one of Mrs: Howarths daughters Miss Emma, a sweet creature who died. [words crossed out] pray be careful as this is the second time of sending the plants"... "Perhaps Mr: Keene will send the

plants &c to Norwich himself. - I believe Dr: J. E. Smith. - M.D. Norwich will be sufficient direction –

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, no date, this seems to be a postscript to the letter of August 24, 1805 to Hetty]**

*Page 2:---* I have put two Jasmine flowers & three of the tree of imortality [sic] - These last are sweeter then any odours you can know - wou'd [word crossed out] sweetness cou'd remain –

## **1806**

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, February 11, 1806]**

*Page 6:* I have not collected many seeds but I send some which are fine & I send the Barrilienis longiflora\* - very fine seed - I wrote to Mrs: Whitley; but I suppose the letter never reached her for she has not answered nor did Lizzy or Nancy mention it - I am tired of sending plants because they are so unlucky & give more trouble to Mr: Whitley to fetch them than they are worth - I wish I cou'd know if that poor man of the name of Shepherd took home his Bread fruit tree for he had a terribly illnated [sic] Captain - Give my love to Lizzy & Mary & remember me to Mr: Samuel

\*Perhaps a garbled version of Barleria longiflora (thanks to Henry Noltie).

**[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, n.d., likely November 1806]**

*Page 1:* My dear Hetty,

I wrote 7 sheets of paper in form of a letter to you I was about 6 weeks in writing it during all that time imagining that the Sarah Christiana wou'd sail. My letter has been on board this fortnight or these three weeks yet the Vessel is still in the roads & I am not sure that she will sail even with the fleet for she is the ship destined to convey the accounts of Government & they are not ready - however my letter is in, & cannot be recalled & I trust you will have it as soon as the rest - It is all about the Vellore business & a reply to your melancholy intelligence on which subject I have already said so much I will no longer dwell. - This I write to inclose [sic] a letter to Ned, & Nancy I leave it open that you may read the contents & I shall then not have occasion to write the same thing twice. - The fleet is not yet come in God knows when it may - The melancholy intelligence you sent us came very quick the ships containing that news came 27th of June after little more than three months Passage –

Captain Willim whom I have mentioned in the inclosed letter [sic]; [words crossed out] probably may be better known to you than to me I shall send him to you, He is the (2) only person I know or that has offered to take things for us. - I think he will be safe, for he is gentlemanly in his manner & very pressing to be intrusted [sic] with things. - Polly sends views of all our houses –

I send by him a bag of seeds which you will please to send to Mr: Whitley as they contain many seeds which I shou'd be glad to see growing. - I send the bag of seeds by a Mr: Hoseasan who is

going hence with a large fortune - They have so much to carry for themselves that I cannot ask them to take anything home for me but he will take the bag to Trincomali in Ceylon where Captain Willim & some more of the ships are waiting for the remainder of the fleet and will then deliver it to him - the seeds are directed to you pr. favour of Capt: Willim. - as some of the seeds have been procured with difficulty I was loth to trust them all to one chance (as I did everything to the poor Prince of Wales-) I have therefore divided them in some measure, Captain Willim's bag contains my own collection & half of Dr: Berry's - and I send another bag containing Dr: Rottler's collection in the Mysore &c very numerous & the other half of Dr: Berry's - I have besides added a packet of flower tree seeds & some others fit for a present to any body you may chuse [sic] to give them to & who wants them whilst they are fresh. You never told me you wanted them or I wou'd always send them; but indeed they are of little use to any but those in the profession for Private Gentlemen's Gardeners wou'd either give them away or not take the pains to raise them - If any misfortune shou'd happen to Captain Willims bag - give the little packet with the rest to Mr: Whitly but if that comes safe keep it. It is within a larger bag containing the other packets of Dr: Rottler & Dr: Berry's half & this packet has a label on it directed to Mrs: James - This great bundle (-but it is not very large) is given to the care of Captain Torrens a very genteel & I think a very good natured young man who was Passenger on board ship with us out & who is going home with his Regiment the 19th: Light Dragoons - The first & best Regiment that has been in the Country. - I do not suppose you will see Torrens, he will either be with his Regiment or go to Ireland to his friends but he will send the seeds by a mail coach from some place where they land to you. - The little Packet which I put up were intended for Mr: W. Cam in consequence of the letter which you inclosed [sic] from him but Sir Henry wou'd not let me send them to him because he said it was foolish to do so [word crossed out] for Lady Rodney [word crossed out] has a brother & sister-in-law in Ceylon where they may get seeds better than here; & because the gardeners wou'd only steal them &c &c - so give the little packet to whom you please -