

Transcription of letters by Mary Symonds, 1801-1807

These transcriptions were made by members of the Gwillim Project (2019-2022) from images of the original manuscripts in the British Library (IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1-4). The names of the letters and the page numbers (in bold parentheses) correspond to those in the scanned copies of the letters. The original manuscript and folio numbers are given in brackets at the beginning of each letter.

Letter_002_MS_10-1801: Mary Symonds to Esther Symonds, 14 October 1801 (Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 4r-11v)

(1) My Dear Mother

I hope you have from time to time received several letters through Hetty which I have written during the passage out & since our arrival here. Betsy & I had written a large packet which we intended to go by a Ship which should have left this place some weeks ago but She is still here under repair. In my last I could give you very little more satisfaction than by saying we were all arrived safe and well as we had not seen any thing of the country. I have now the pleasure to say that we like it very much and I think it will agree very well with us upon the whole Betty has since she embarke[d] at Portsmouth had better health than I have known her to have for years before and I was never better in my life. Mr Gwillim has indeed been a good deal **(2)** teased [?] but he has no serious illness he suffered a good deal from Sea sickness on his passage and since he came here he has had the Prickly heat which is a very violent Eruption and itches violently but all the People here congratulate him and say it is considered as a most favourable symptom and that persons who have it at first generally enjoy very good health here, besides this he had an accident which was very troublesome to him his servant set a jug of boiling water on the ground behind him when he was dressing he stepped [sic] back suddenly and it fell over his leg and scalded him very badly but Betsy immediately applyed [sic] a great quantity of oil to it and when the Surgeon came to see it he thought it looked so cool and well that he chose to continue the same application and it healed very fast but he was obliged to keep himself on a Couch for a fortnight he is now quite **(3)** well and has no other complaint but the bites of the gnats ants and other little insects which abound this month but we are now every day expecting the rains to set in which destroy all these little plagues and we are told that we shall then have four months of fine cool weather just like fine spring weather in England. I think this is a most beautiful country here are a variety of fine trees and a delightfull [sic] verdure we drive out every morning from five to seven o'clock at which time it is quite fresh and

cool here is the greatest variety of roads that can be made in a flat country and which ever one takes one is sure of a fine avenue or a beautiful lane shaded by the fall Bamboo intermixed with the gum Arabic tree which abounds here and is the most elegant tree that I ever saw, the largest trees that resemble English foliage are the tulip tree the Banyan and the mango these I mean are common in the publick roads but we have a great number very fine in the Gardens.

About half past four (4) oclock in the evening one can walk or ride out again for an hour and half very pleasantly. We have a great many native vegetables which are very good but altogether unlike any thing in England. The fruit also I think very good the mellons are not equal to those you have but the Pine apples are excellent the mango the plantain and the Calacca¹

I like very much the last of these makes a tart very much like goosberries [sic], having an agreeable tartness in it. There is a vast deal of visiting In this place which is very pleasant when one is quite at leasure [sic] but I assure you it is difficult to do anything for the houses are all open so that people come in unawares unless one shuts oneself up in ones bed chamber.

Dinners and balls are very frequent and dancing is much pleasanter here than you would think it could be in so warm a climate as the rooms are quite open and the evenings are very cool and pleasant (5) in most of the dining rooms they have two men who stand in the oposite [sic] corners of the room with very large fans made in the form of flags they are much ornamented with painting and brass they are made of a sort of grass which when damped gives out a very agreeable perfume these cool the room very much, most Ladies have [words crossed out] servants who fan them during dinner and stand behind their chairs for that purpose so you see great pains is taken to prevent our feeling any inconvenience from the heat. The Kitchens and other offices are built at a little distance from the house. These people are very excellent cooks but they have a very odd way of cooking all their utensils are very simple but elegant in their forms. The kitchen is a long narrow room with large arches in the wall formed like the mouth of an oven about 2 feet deep on this place they light a fire of sticks for roasting and the spits are turned by boys (6) who are apprentices to the cook. The boiling is generally done over Charcoal fires which are lighted in earthen pots and stand out in the garden on any convenient place.

They boil and stew every thing in earthen vessels which they have of all sizes and various pretty shapes. These cooks are also very good confectioners and mak [sic] all sorts of mixtures of eggs

¹ *Carissa carandas* {Robert Wright, *Illustrations Of Indian Botany*, Volume 2, 1850)

milk and sugar as good as possible custards trifles &c The milk is remarkably rich here and eggs are very plentiful [sic]. The price of fowls is about 10 pence a couple for such chicken as you generally boil at home but they have here two other sorts of fowls the capons are as large as a very fat hen turkey and the other sort of full grown fowl is about the size of a Dorking fowl² which you have in London. The largest size turkeys here are the most monstrous things you can conceive and look like a mountain on the table: provisions are in general very cheap and so are the servants wages but the quantity of food you are obliged to put on your table and the number of servants you (7) are obliged to keep make housekeeping [sic] quite dear enough the servant who dresses your hair would on no account empty a washstand basin [sic] you must keep one for every purpose yet it is in this respect much worse in Bengall and other parts of India than it is here. We have a Butler to order the dinner a Compadore to go to the market to buy it he has two servants to carry it home the Butler has a second Butler under him & a man to write out his accounts and a servant to clean the plate. Each horse you keep has two servants who do nothing but attend to him, and if you keep Poultry there must be one for each sort as the same woman who takes care of ducks never interferes with the chicken &c The gardens here are very handsome as we have a great variety of beautiful Shrubs that grow very high and blow very profusely many of the fruit trees have extremely [sic] handsome blossoms and with their thick foliage conceal the long base stalks of the palm trees shewing only their graceful tops which form a fine contrast in the groves and are constantly (8) waving [sic] their long branches in the most stately manner. The great abundance of sweet scented flowers give rise to many pretty customs amongst the natives here whenever they mean to compliment they present flowers to you, not plucked with leaves and stems as you gather them but pipped out as you may do cowslips or jessamine, sometimes white and sometimes pink flowers they use for this purpose, when they have pipped them they take the fibres of a plant which are as strong as a four penny thread and they string them upon these as close as possible passing the thread through the bottom part of the flower pip so that it forms a rope of about an inch in diameter this they present in wreaths of a yard or two yards long. At the time the Nabob was enthroned³ these wreaths were presented to all the company and the Nabob himself placed them around the neck of the principal persons he also presented them with a small parcel of the Beetle nut which the natives [word crossed out] chew done up in the leaves of a tree (9) gilded over. They strew flowers on the graves of all their friends occasionally and when any person of consequence dies they weave a cloth in this manner to wrap round the body they take more wreaths of flowers as I

² The Dorking is a British breed of domestic chicken. It is named for the town of Dorking, in Surrey.

³ Azim ud-Daula, Nawab of the Carnatic (1775-1819) was enthroned on 31 July 1801.

have described and plat them into each other exactly as a weaver does his threads fixing them into a frame or loom for that purpose. The tombs of great persons are very handsome buildings and I am told that the inside of some of them is kept constantly hung round with flowers and that 6 or 8 men are employed in one to renew [word crossed out] them dayly [sic]. We were last night at a grand ball given by a Mrs. Chinery at which there were about a hundred and fifty persons they danced in the house which was finely lighted and dressed with flowers, the supper was in the garden where a table was laid near 3 hundred feet long upon carpets. Over the table was an awning of green cloth bordered supported on each side by collumns [sic] of large Bamboo round each of which an immense qantity [sic] of the branches of trees and flowers were bound so that it had the appearance **(10)** of a beautiful long bower it was lighted by above an hundred wax lights all burning in cut Glass [?] shades altogether it had a very brilliant appearance. Balls of this sort occur every week but the suppers are generally in the house. I am endeavoring to make a set of drawings of the different Casts and descriptions of the natives of this country to give you all an exact idea of their dresses, but I fear I shall not have more than one or two to send with this as the ships I am told will sail sooner than I expected and it is difficult for them to suit their time to mine to draw them but as another ship is expected here dayly [sic]; which will leave this place in a short time for England I hope to make a packet by her. I have written my letter on India paper for two reasons first that it is much cheaper than Europe paper and secondly that I think you will like to see what they make here, it is poor stuff. If you can get some muchrooms [sic] at any time a little ketchup or a few preserved apricots **(11)** we shall be much obliged to you for them, the two Gammons of Bacon Ned was so good as to give us have turned out very fine; one and the half of the other have been dressed for different companies here they were much admired and eat at Lunchines [sic] clean to the bone, Sir T Strange & Mr. Sullivan the other Judge, come every day whilst the first lasted. I hope the dear Boys are all going on well; by the time you receive this you will have another stout lad I suppose ready to run amongst the party. I hope you will have this pretty soon, as ~~The~~ Admiral Rainier goes home in this fleet and therfore [sic] it is expected They will not be delayed any where on their passage. If I had time I could lengthen out my letter to a quire of paper, as it is I fear you will be tired and I must close it this morn^g; as the ship sails tomorrow all sorts of English pickles are greatly valued in this country not only by the Europeans but also by the natives who steal them from you if they can get at them in any way and eat them privately, their **(12)** laws forbid them to eat or drink any thing which has been touched by an inferior {so that the cooking for them is always done by one of their own cast, this they strictly adhere to in all things they are indifferent about but their passion for these pickles is so great that they

codescend [sic] to eat them tho made by us whom they account the lowest of all and class with the kamars or outcasts [word crossed out] one cannot trust the jar of Pickle even with the Butler but I am obliged to give out a little at a time in a saucer and to observe that it is brought to table for they cannot resist they have no vinegar in this country but what is brought from England & for that we pay about 6 shillings a quart as they could not afford to make them if they knew how. The three little figures I have sent are an Ayah or Ladies Portuguese maid A little Moor Boy who is the sort of servant generally kept to wait on single Ladies at dinner, and Fanny Lackey [?] whose business is (13) to put water in the Bedrooms and to sweep the floors of them, the sweeping she performs with the little rod or Broom in her hand and in the other hand she has a dust shovel which they call a fan it is made of chip or cane of which materials they make a great number of usefull & Elegant utensils; footstools dinner trays Baskets in the form of Boxes to hold milinary or cloaths of any sort, ~~and~~ they look very ornamental in the rooms as they colour them, and plat them in very pretty figures, they also make mats for the floors with cane which are very dureable [sic]; most of the houses are entirely covered with them, as the floors are of chinam that is a sort of stoco [stucco] they colour it to represent marble of different kinds in squares this has an elegant appearance but the colour comes (14) off on ones cloaths very much when it is not matted.

They also make Blinds of the cane which are painted green to prevent the glare of light from coming in too strong the fronts of the houses are quite open a house generally consists of five rooms or halls of an equal size in the centre; the first {to which you ascend by a very wide flight of steps, is called a Veranda the rooms are divided only by Collumns [sic] or in arches so that the whole of the sitting rooms lye [sic] open before you when you enter. Besides this you have two wings of 3 rooms each; these make chambers and Library. ~~and~~ If you have gentlemen visitors [sic] they sleep in Bungaloes [sic] which are small very pretty houses built in different parts of the garden. Mr R. Clarke has one of these which is very comfortable and pretty it (15) consists of a dining room with Verandas on 3 sides of it a Room over that and on the top of all a little slight room with a thatch or matted top and the sides are all round of Venetian blinds in this he sleeps as present and think it very cool and pleasant but when the rains set in the lower room will no doubt be better none of the windows in this country are glazed they are very large and have fixed Venetian blinds very strong which fasten like shutters you shall have some sketches to give you an Idea of the houses very soon I hope and of many other things as I shall not suffer myself to be Idle where there is so much matter of [word crossed out] curiosity which I know my friends will be glad to have related and drawn even in the slightest manner. I beg you to give my

compliments to all who do me the favour to enquire after me. And most affectionate remembrances **(16)** to Ned Nancy and the dear Boys.

I remain my dear Mother

Your dutifull & affect^{ate} daughter,

Mary Symonds

Madras

October 14th, 1801

Letter_003_MS_10-1801: Mary Symonds to Hester James, Madras Oct. 14, 1801
(Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff.12r-13v)

(1) Oct. 14, 1801

My dear Hetty,

I have sent a long letter for my Mother directed to you and left open that you may read it before you forward it. I send 3 little figures which I fear my Mother will be disappointed to find of as small a size as they will require her best spectacles to discover their ornaments; the necklace bracelets and earring of the lowest servants are of the finest gold some of the better order of women are quite loaded with gold and jewels, but in these ornaments consist their whole wealth they call them joys some wear large rings in the nose and have their toes and fingers [word missing] with rings They have no **(2)** furniture in their houses but an Earthen vessel to boil their rice and curry in and some chip baskets. Their whole dress consists of a long peice [sic] of cloth or muslin which they wrap about them in an Elegant manner. If I had drawn the figures of a larger size you would perhaps have had some difficulty and expence in getting them through the India house or else I must have troubled some person to get them on shore and so have used that interest which would convey a better thing. If you chuse [sic] to keep the whole collection as I send them you must copy [sic] them for my mother or else desire her to return them to you-I could wish you to shew them to G. Samuel and tell him that he shall have some houses and Choultries⁴ and pagodas very **(3)** soon that is to say we propose seting [sic] about them after the

⁴ A choultry is a resting place, sometimes a *loggia*. See Henry Yule, *Hobson-Jobson: A glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and of kindred terms, etymological, historical,*

rains are over when for 2 or 3 months we shall be able to sit out of doors several hours in the day as the weather will be cool and clear. I hope now we are settled that I shall be able to send something for the curious by every opportunity.

If you are in the habit of making the preserves as we did formerly, it will not be taken amiss that you add a few pottles of fine high flavoured strawberries into your stewpan for us as that they turned out I think finer than any other of our prese[rves] but they are all very good, and great treasures here. They were only boiled into jam the same as Raspberries with a good deal of sugar, be sure give my kind love to James and tell him I dont [sic] expect him to [word missing] all the stuf [sic] I have scribbled indeed (4) I think he will not attempt to forestall this budget but send up to you as soon as he sees the length of it.

Believe me to be my dear Hetty

Yours most affectionately

Mary Symonds

Madras

Oct.r 14, 1801

Ps we did not forget the third of this month and we had a goose of Michaelmass day.

[Note at Bottom]Mrs. James

Letter_008_MS_02-1802: Mary Symonds to Hester James, Madras, February 11, 1802
(Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 39r-46v)

(1) My Dear Hetty,

I have written several letters to you since my arrival in this country or rather have scrawled over several sheets of paper and I fear I shall go on in the same slovenly manner for I cannot persuade myself to begin to write till the ships are almost ready to sail and when I do begin I find I have so much to say to you that I have no patience to write well. It was a great satisfaction to us to receive a letter from you by the Apollo tho' the information we gained by it was not so satisfactory as we hoped it might have been by the time it was dated for how you could have kept up till so late in May I cannot conceive. We had great pleasure in hearing of Miss James and Miss Turners[?] spending the spring with you as James must have had fine walks and plenty of amusement in shewing them the Lyons about London.⁵ I have seen them both, but it is a long time since I saw Miss James it was when she was at scholl [sic] at Miss Williams's, she was then a very handsome girl and I dare say she is much improved since that time. Your new drawing room will be an additional inducement to me to endeavour at improving myself in drawing. I am at present incapable of giving you any satisfactory representations of this country or of the people and consequently cannot send you any thing that will be worthy of a place on the wall. but my anxiety to give you an accurate idea of these people makes me send you some little daubs from time to time by way of illustration to our letters. Now we are pretty well settled I hope to get a good deal of time for drawing and as we have peace with France I suppose our opportunities of sending and receiving letters will be much more frequent, this letter will be sent by the Sir Stephen Lushington (2) she was one of the fleet we came out with. I sent a letter to you on our arrival here, by a Mr. Williams who went home in the [** left blank**]

he was a Shipmate of ours when I entrusted my packet to him I believed him to be unfortunate in being obliged to return so soon but I afterwards learned that he is a most abominable fellow I hope he did not contrive to scrape any acquaintance with you. Captain Mash arrived here yesterday, Feb. 5th and I have this morning had the pleasure of reading two letters from you (the last of which is dated August 29th) one from my mother, one from Mrs. Morgan some from Mrs. Chambers, &c. &c. I thank God heartily for the comfortable news you tell me of your own and the dear little boy's health indeed your letters are much more pleasing to me than all the publick news in the World so do not waste time and paper in apologies on that account. a packet of newspapers when ever you have an opportunity of sending them will afford us a great deal of amusement and give us all those particular circumstances, most of the great

⁵ 'Lions of Londons for Country Cousins', an expression denoting the sights of London. See: British Library <http://access.bl.uk/item/pdf/lsidyv32bfe0fb>

events which take place in Europe are sent here over Land to the Government and to several great merchants houses who have regular correspondence [sic]. A chit chat latter which seems to place us amongst you all, is what we most desire to receive. I intreat [sic] you to continue your present plan of telling us all that occurs for if it were not for your letters we should feel ourselves quite friendless and forgot; not a word have we had the Brompton family,⁶ nor have Sir Henrys family troubled him with any heavy packets. a little of Mr: Johns ⁷humour would be very acceptable and ~~would~~ enliven us much, I am very happy to hear ~~that~~ he is about to be married, if it is true I suppose you will see the lady and pray give us some account of her (3) for I dare say he will not give himself the trouble to gratify our curiosity with any particulars and I have reason to think he will not even give me an opportunity of congratulating him. you will now be able to judge of his true character, he used to appear very differently at home and abroad, if he receives his friends in the same cold manner in his own house as he used to do in his fathers I suppose it will no longer be attributed to the restraint he is under from those he lives with.-notwithstanding all his uncertainty I have however a great regard for him and wish him all the happiness in the world, and should I ever be fortunate enough to have a house in England he will be a very wellcome [sic] guest. I intend writing to G. Samuel by this ship because I think he will be glad to hear from me tho he has not asked me to write his time is very precious and therefore [sic] I shall not expect to hear much from him. --

You have not mentioned Mrs. Burnsidess death in any of your letters nor does Mrs: Shephard say any thing of it in hers this I am much surprised at as I saw it in a newspaper of the latter end of April 1801, which was you know soon after we left England. I often wish to give you some Idea of our acquaintance here but at (sometimes?) it appears a very difficult undertaking and at others a very useless one yet it may be pleasant to you to know who they are and you may occasionally [sic] meet with some of their connexions one name I know I have heard James mention as well known in the muslin world a Mr. & Mrs. Brown he is a son of Brown of the firm of Brown & Rogers, we are not very intimate with the lady as she was near lying in when we arrived and has not been out much since she recovered he is a fine young man rather dashing and we are told he was very much so before he married and was a (4) good deal in debt she was a Miss Sewel a relation of one of the first merchants here. another of our acquaintances is a Mrs. Chinery who may be a relation of your friend of that name for ought [sic]

⁶ In reference to Elizabeth and Mary Thoburn and their step-father Reginald Whitley who ran a plant nursery in Brompton.

⁷ John Gwillim was Henry Gwillim's older brother, an apothecary in Hereford.

I know I am told she is the daughter of an Inn keeper on the road near Stamford Bridge, she is however one of the finest Ladies in this place. They give splendid balls and it is observed of the lady that she wears the most expensive dresses of any body and seldom appears twice in the same. But the grand lady of all is a Mrs. Dick her husband is the highest member of council [sic] who is married, in consequence of which she takes place of every body in the settlement just as the Lady Mayoress does in the City I believe he is very rich, she is rather pretty and at least 20 years younger than he is; her father is a Taylor at Charing Cross his name is Douglas she has a brother here a writer. Living with Mrs. Dick is a Miss Boydell a niece of the Aldermans she is about fifty years old she came out here about a year or two ago with Mrs. D.- she dances away at the balls and attends all the publick amusements of the place, some people say she is a good sort of woman and only came here at the particular request of Mrs. D with whom she had been very intimate for some time, but others are of opinion that she intends to captivate. The most intimate acquaintances I have are the three daughters of a Mr. Westcot his wife died about a year ago. The eldest of the young ladies is about 20, the second is 18 & the youngest 13 years old. They have with them a governess a Miss Williams she is rather a handsome girl and clever enough but has a good deal of the Godwinian⁸ shool [sic] and the modern dash. (5) Two of the young ladies were married on the last day of the year. The eldest to a Mr. Maitland a merchant in a considerable house here he is about 43 years old, we think Mrs. M- very much like Lizzy Thoburn in her person but it is only in her person for her manners are exactly opposite, for as Liz is too anxious a temper to let herself be comfortable, so this good lady is so very easy and indifferent that she takes no pains at all to make her friends comfortable besides this she is very vain and not very wise. The second who is married to a Mr. Rowley a rich companies servant is remarkably plain in her person, she has not however her sisters faults she is attentive enough, and her husband is remarkably so and a very good natured man, he has settled 10 thousand pounds upon her which sum was paid into the hands of trustees before the wedding [sic] he is a young man about the midway between [sic] 40 and 50 or rather nearer to the latter number of years. I have not chosen this family for intimacies [sic] on account of their merit for I do not much delight in them but their father was particularly attentive and kind to us when we first arrived here and continues to be so he has been extremely desirous that his daughters should be very much with us, and Mr Rowley is the same. Mr. Westcot is a very proud old man he ranks very high in the civil service of the company (6) and was very rich at one time but he lost all his property by some speculation. I fear I shall tire you with descriptions of people you know

⁸ In reference to the educational ideas of William Godwin, husband of Mary Wollstonecraft.

nothing about but you may read them at your leisure or let it alone altogether if you like. We have a great many more white faced ladies for the society here is very large, but at least half the women are half cast, that is they are the children of English men by black women; these girls are sent home to England, to be educated as it is called, that is to learn to dance to squall and to strum I have not met with one tolerable voice in the place amongst the women. Sir Benjⁿ Sulivans⁹ family are very numerous and very curious, two daughters and a son arrived here since we did, he has a son and daughter, one of the girls who is lately arrived, these are half cast, the other girl is just fifteen, and her brother a man of about 20, are children by a french woman whom he met with in Germany, she had been a kept Mistress of the Emperor Joseph, he brought her here as his wife and she was receiv'd as such, however she grew tired of her spouse, and went off to England with another Gentleman who now keeps her in London, soon after this affair took place Mr. S-- married a lady here stating that he was divorced by the Archbishop of Paris. by his wife, he has had ten children, 6 of them are living with her in England, where she is gone to (7) superintend their education. Most of the civilians have these blackey families, the misses are sent home to learn to give themselves a few airs and then return here to be provided for by marrying military men up the country. when this work is performed a man of about 60 is at liberty to return to England with a pretty young wife and a family of small children!!! You will wonder why I say the Civilians have half cast children to provide for more particularly than the military men. The reason is that the latter are always moving from one station to another and the children are forgot or perhaps never known to them at all, besides which the Military young men have not as good incomes and therfore [sic] cannot afford to educate and provide for them. We have had a great deal of amusment [sic]going forward most of it I have been to but the evenings and mornings are so cold that Betsy has not been able to bear them, at first all the medical people advised her to rise early and drive out before breakfast but she caught cold every time she tried so Mr. Ord who attends her, observing that, has advised her not to rise till the sun has been up some time and always to take a cup of coffee first. I must tell you that Mr. Ord has a Brother in Cheapside, I recollect the name on a sign John Ord & Com^y, but I do not remember what trade it is but I believe a considerable one.--

(8) But to return to the pleasures of the place. I must tell you that I have a great many good friends who are always ready in offering to carry me with them to any Balls or shows that are going forward, I have chosen one Lady, my near neighbour with whom I generally go Mrs.

⁹ Sir Benjamin Sullivan was a Puisne Judge in the Supreme Court at Madras.

Trent the wife of General Trent she is a very quiet pleasant woman and rather pretty they have been in England and returned to this Country about 2 years ago. They intend to return home in another year. The officers of the Scotch Brigade gave a Ball on St. Andrews day and a very grand supper under tents in the garden. The Nabob¹⁰ and all his attendants were there they were all dressed very fine some in shawl dresses with embroidered silver sashes and turbans. The Nabob wore a muslin dress richly ornamented with silver, a sash all of silver and a turban the same, besides a great quantity of jewels and the plume which was presented to him by the governor at his coronation. I believe I have not written to you any account of the Nabob, he did Sir Henry the honor to write him a friendly note, requesting him to fix a time when he might pay us a visit, the next morning being fixed he came to breakfast, with his son and about 60 attendants, about 6 of whom were of high rank and sat down to the table with him, he is a very fat tall young man rather of a lively countenance. he talks (9) a great deal and eats voraciously [sic]. Betsy expressed a wish to see some of the largest Elephants, and he very politely sent the next morning, all richly caparisoned and their faces beautifully painted in scrolls winding in the course of the muscles. I mounted one, the Elephant kneels down and a step ladder is placed against his side for one to mount, the rider or driver sits on the neck behind him is a seat divided in 2 two square apartments [sic], these are lined with rich silk or velvet, (that I was in was green velvet) with cushions [sic] of the same to support the back and arms each of the apartments holds two persons very comodiously [sic] but you must squat like a taylor. Over the seat is a dome supported by four small pillars at the corners, the dome is lined with velvet richly ornamented with gold stars, it is also fringed with deep gold fringe and a great many large gold tassels about it, when you are seated and the steps replaced on the animals side under a rich cloth which covers him all over, he rises up with a motion just like the rocking of a ship and you are forced to hold fast whilst he rises or you would be thrown out, when he is up he trots [sic] tolerably fast, and the motion is easy and pleasant enough. I think it must be an agreeable [sic] way of traveling as they are very sure footed and one should see the country all around. (10)

The Free Masons gave a grand Ball and supper on St. Johns Day all the gentlemen of the lodge appeared in their jewels and all their ensignia their wives were distinguished by blue and silver sashes and blue ribbands embroidered with different devices in silver relating to the rank of their husbands in the Lodge The rooms were decorated with festoons of blue silk, and painted

¹⁰ Azim ud-Daula, Nawab of the Carnatic.

transparencies¹¹ Lord Clive gave a Ball on the Queens Birthday in the same style as the others, the supper was in the garden, under tents. I have lately been three mornings to the races and you will be surprised when I tell you I have been almost starved with cold tho I had on a cloake, and a double shawl I set out from home at 5 in the morning as we have six miles to drive to the race stand. The sun rises at a little past six oclock but there is so much dew at this time of the year that it has very little power till 8 or nine; I am no judge of the racing sport but I believe the two first days it was was [sic] very good, the third however was the most amusing to me as there were several absurd poney races, and what was very curious and quite laughable a Camel race, and an Elephant race. The Elephants besides their riders had each a man pulling them by the tail and belabouring their sides with a large stick, but no one attempted to get the start of the other. They all made as much haste as they could and came in, in the same order they went **(11)** out. The veranda which is build [sic] for the accomodation [sic] of the company is in a most beautiful situation commanding a very fine view; if I had Mrs. Ratcliffs¹² pen I would describe it but but as you see mine is a very sorry one I cannot undertake such a task.

I assure you my finery wears out apace and one wants a great variety for meeting the same people everyday. Pray call on Mr. Wilby and get a small stock of ornaments from him when you send for what I had from him have been very usefull I should like a few things from the jewelers but not very expensive ones at Dyde & Scribes and such places you will meet with fancy beads which are much esteemed here my brown beads are much admired which I bought there, I think they called them Egyptian. be sure send me some necklace and bracelets of the patent pearls I should like the necklace to be about the size of a pea each bead and the bracelets smaller about 3 rows each if the small clasps are worn if not you will buy them of one row or ten rows according to the fashion a pair or two of the patent pearl drops for earrings. do not buy any of the pearl beads smaller than this O [drawing of bead] for the very small real pearls in this country are not dear but of a large size they are immense [sic].¹³ Betsy has some of the patent which she brought out with her and she is the only person who has them here, even the Pearle **(12)** merchants take them for real, one told Betsy that her plain drop earrings were worth 900 pagodas¹⁴ and he would not believe they were false till he weighed them.

¹¹ Transparencies were painted on translucent cloth or paper. See <http://shannonselin.com/2016/10/illuminations-transparencies/>

¹² Likely Ann Radcliffe, author of Gothic fiction.

¹³ She draws a circle for size, marked by O in the document.

¹⁴ Unit of currency.

All our cloaths have been very much admired and borrowed by twenty people for patterns, now you know we did go about a good deal for them and got all the varieties we could. But the people who send out things to their friends here in general do not chose [sic] well. They buy the dearest things they can get and by that means all get the same things I am very glad I did not afford a patent Lace gown here are several and a pretty [sic] English muslin smartly made and trimed [sic] is thought quite as much of, a variety of taste in the make and triming [sic] is every thing, be sure send flowers and fancy feathers. And some shoes and gloves occasionally and dont forget the Magazine of the fashions, that we may see how to put them on. I should like somthing [sic] made at Mrs. Lancasters now and then. The people all have Miss Braces things here and Miss French I like to have mine different if I can-

I shall send with this a drawing which Betsy has written a description of therfore [sic] I need not say any thing on the subject but that it is sad representation I shall also send the old Taylor who works in the house Betsy says he puts her in mind of some **(13)** the people described in the Arabian nights entertainment.¹⁵ I have painted a table and some other things about the house, and I have drawn some Butterflies and other insects but somehow or other I do not find much time to draw going out in the morning for exercise and in the evening for pleasure, with preparations for the latter take up a great deal of time. and I have a good many notes to answer every day. I do the house keeping business too which is a good deal of work for I am obliged to keep every thing locked up in a store room and to give out every day to the different servants a proper quantity for the days use I cannot trust them with more they are such pilferers, I must tell you how they contrived to cheat me of the candles I gave them out a proper number and they cut a peice [sic] off each before they set them up, this I should not found out soon a Lady told me to observe that and I found they really had done so, this is a good instance of the kind of thefts committed [sic] by the natives in general, they are not hardy enough to break open any place or to steal any large thing but they are always at these petty thefts.

I don't think I ever told you any thing about the fruit of this country, I must **(14)** own I was disappointed in them at first the flavours are so different from any thing I had been used to, and in general so very powerfull [sic]. I am now quite reconciled to them and I like them nearly

¹⁵ *Arabian nights entertainments: consisting of one thousand and one stories* was the first European version of the "One Thousand and One Nights," a collection of stories originally written down in Arabic. The French translation was produced by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717 and translated into English by Beaumont, appearing in various editions from 1706 onwards.

as well as the English. We have two or three sorts of oranges the sort most esteemed is very high flavoured but not very juicy another which I prefer is sweet and very full of juice but not much flavour, a third sort (the worst of all) seems to be something between [sic] a China and a Seville orange [sic] the pines and mellons [sic] are exactly the same as in England. One of best fruits is the pumplemoos which is the same as the shaddock¹⁶ of the West Indies you may have seen them as they are sometimes carried home from there they grow about the size of a large mellow [sic] and are in fact a great overgrown orange of a very fine sort the Mango is very much admired and is a very fine fruit also is very high flavored and I think very agreeably [sic], but those who dislike them say they are like turpentine tow and treacle tied up in a rag and sucked. The guava is shaped like a codling¹⁷ its texture is exactly a mellow pear and it has something of the flavour of strawberries. The plantains grow in large clusters sometimes above twenty in a bunch each plantain is about 6 inches (15) long and an inch and half in diameter.

This is the most common sort which is white but there are a great many varieties of them they differ in size and colour some are green and some red but they all grow alike in clusters in this manner [drawing of plantain cluster here] it is unlike any thing in England in its taste and I am very fond of it I fear I have told you some of this before so I believe I must make memorandums of that I write least [sic] I give you the same dish twice and I am sure you will think once quite enough. This writing is really too bad and I am ashamed of it, but my pen is quite worn out and pens are very dear so I am obliged to be saving and wear them down to stumps. besides I am going to a ball and cannot spare time to write well, for the packet closes tomorrow and I have two more letters which I want to write-

I desire you will give my love and a hundred kisses to dear James and my little nephew Tom pray take care of him that I may see him a stout fellow 6 years hence, (the term of my transportation will then be expired) If I were to adopt your plan of making spots for all the kisses I want to send I must take a sheet of paper and spot it all over pray give some to Liz and Mary & Mama and if James has no objection you may give one to Regi, but they are too precious to bestow on Finn¹⁸ [?] tho he has been a sufferer with his poor ear. I beg to be remembered to Dr. [?] Thompson you may tell her I have been very often in the exhibiting room but am not yet disposed of. I cannot find in my heart to begin another sheet tho I would

¹⁶ Pomelo.

¹⁷ Likely codlin, a variety of apple.

¹⁸ A dog?

have great pleasure in filling it. I think (16) you will say we never know when to leave off. So
God bless you all, good by, good by,

your very affectionate sister,

M. Symonds

Madras Feb. 11th, 1802

I have changed my mind, and shall fill up this piece of paper and wrap up the letter in a loose piece as the writing all shews through, and I want to tell you of a curious fruit which I forgot before; it is called a rose apple by the Europeans, it is the size and colour of an apricot but it has an eye like a medler [sic]¹⁹ of a delicate green the texture is exactly an apricot and when you break it open it is loose from the kernell [sic] as the apricot is when over ripe the taste is exactly roses and sugar most elegantly mixed and not too sweet, the kernell is green, (with a very thin brown shell) and tastes the same as the green part [?] of a rose bud, it has just that astringency, and the crispness of it. I desire you will tell the Bromptonians, that I dont think they deserve to be remembered at all and I dont know that I shall write to Liz, it is so shabby in her not to send us a line when we had left them above half a year, before the last fleet sailed I have sent a great many scoldings in this letter and I am very angry with every body that dont write to me. I will try to write a few lines to Mrs. Shepheard but least I should not be sure to give my kindest remembrances to her and thank her for all her good wishes and tell her that I dont intend to return home before my seven years are expired least I should be sent back again and I am sure I shall not like another such a parting.

be sure send us all the pretty things you see, which you think will be usefull [sic] to us, whatever their nature may be. I may venture this commission to you, as I know you have no immoderate idea of expence. -dont be lazy going out, shoping [sic] will do you good and make you gay, and teach you to spend your husbands money, he has not time to

Letter_011_MS_03-1802: Mary Symonds to Hester James, 18 March 1802 (Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 55r-57v)

¹⁹ Medlar, a fruit.

(1) My Dear Hetty,

I sit down just to write a few lines for my conscience sake, that I may not have to accuse myself of omitting to write by every opportunity. I have little to say Betsy having monopolized all the subjects except the descriptive ones which are so many and lead to such long letters, that I have not venture [sic] on them at present; but besides want of time, I am beginning to grow diffident in those matters as she does them a great deal better than I; mine did well enough to fill up the time when she was silent, but now she writes such long letters I am a little jealous I can tell you, and am fancying you won't have much respect for my performances don't say this is all out of lazyness [sic]. I think you can guess how happy your letters made me, particularly the account of the dear little boy; God bless him I hope he is well, and be sure tell us all about him in your letters. I must tell you how I spend a good deal of time; it is owing to a new acquirement which has brought me into great request here; (2) amongst my female friends; I am become a miniature painter (don't laugh) I have finished one Lady's portrait, have two more in hand, and twenty petitioners praying to be drawn; but I don't undertake gentlemen for if I did I should not have breathing time. I thought to have sent you a specimen of my performances (in that way) by these ships, but I have not had time to do any of our own family, except myself; I drew myself first as a trial, and it was thought like, but I have had the misfortune to loose [sic] it. I believe it is stolen by some of the servants [sic], I shall be much obliged to you if you will send me a dozn [sic] of glasses for miniatures of different sizes²⁰ and let them come by the first opportunity, our friend G. Samuel²¹ will tell you where to get them; I can buy plenty of Ivory here, and have got some charming brushes and white paint from China. Pray tell G.S. that I expect he will write to me and give me some information on this subject, and I desire he will let me into all the secrets he can find out about it, for I cannot get any instruction here. I hope you have thought of my wig & Betsys I shall want it sadly in October, ones own hair does very well at this dry season but during the rains and when the damp (3) sea wind blows it is impossible to be comfortable without false hair. I suppose Mr. James would give me a wig, as the sailors use the word (if he were near me) for talking of wearing such a thing: At sea a 'Wig' signifies a scolding. When you buy bonnets or caps for us remember what suits you will suit me and Nancy Greens head is exactly the thing for Betsy, I have not written a line yet to poor Nancy for this fleet, but I hope I shall have time to say something to her; if I do not write be sure remember to give my love to her. We expect this Fleet to sail tomorrow but I shall be certain about it this evening as we are to meet

²⁰ Portrait miniatures were painted on ivory and often enclosed in metal locket fitted with glass covers, which is likely why Mary asked for "glasses."

²¹ George Samuel (d. 1823) was a landscape painter. He was a family friend who apparently mentored Elizabeth and Mary in painting.

the PostMaster general at dinner; his wife is my very particular friend Mrs. Rowley. All the Regiments at this place have lately been reviewed by the Governor and the Commander in Chief; the men are so very gallant here that the officers have always thought it necessary to give invitations to all the Ladies in the settlement to breakfast with them under tents after the reviews; this is very pleasant as they begin at daybreak and sit down before the sun becomes uncomfortably hot; and some of them have very good kinds of music. When you see Mrs. Shephard pray tell her I am greatly obliged to her for her kind remembrances of me and good wishes. I have an intimate acquaintance whom I think she may know a Miss Notley a niece of Cap^{tn} Blake of Gt. Ormand Street she is pretty lively (4) Girl and a good deal admired here it is said she is to be married to an officer of the Scotch Brigade. I have sent by the Surgeon of the Monarch 3 small Bags of beads I don't know if you may like them but I think they will look singular and pretty in England for bracelets and necklace. They are worn here by the Natives; sometimes they have them set in gold like acorn cups at each end and connected by a little gold link.

If printed Cambrick muslins or any light coloured things are worn which will bear washing I should like to have a few sent out frequently, as they are not common here and the few I have are very much admired; I don't altogether object to things which will not wash as they are very pleasant in the cool season but one don't [sic] want many of them. We are much obliged to you for your kind thought of the apricots and other sweetmeats, whenever you can conveniently send things of that nature. They will be very acceptable as will a few bottles of different colour sugar plumbs [sic] you will get a great variety of those kind of things at Tringham's in Holborn he will sell them very cheap if you get Dick Hodges²² to order them for you at the wholesale [sic] price, or he will sell them so to you. I dare say, if you buy them in John Gwillims²³ name you need not fear overstocking us with them as they are much admired here and are always put on the table when there is any company. I suppose you will think it strange as we do, that our two companions should be appointed Registers, Mr. Temple is deputy Register to the Supreme Court, he is very well off for one who has been (5) here so short a time, but there is no realizing the golden dreams people have of this country. Pray give my love to Jemmy and tell him that master Harry has got a stick which would make him a little jealous, it is a fine Bamboo as thick as my wrist and mounted very fine with silver, he has got a spade and a how [sic] too, to work in his garden when the weather is cool enough to permit him to take so much exercise; besides these he has a fine family of live playthings which he takes

²² Richard Hodges was the husband of Henry Gwillim's sister Mary.

²³ The father or brother of Henry Gwillim. Both were apothecaries.

great delight in peafowls, jungle-fowls, turkeys, a fine Cassawary, which is a curious bird you may have seen Exeter-change,²⁴ it is shaped like an ostrich, of a brown colour, the feathers resemble hairs, and the wings are so small as to be useless: he has also a flock of sheep, two Bullocks to draw manure for the garden, and his stud of four horses; these are two carriage horses, one fine Arabian, which he rides, and a nice little piebald poney for the chaise; or bandy (as it is called here).

Mr. Register Clarke has got acquainted with several families and spends his time pleasantly amongst them, we accept of separate invitations, that is to say Richard is frequently asked out to male parties, and I am often asked to spend the day with young folks, without Sir Henry and Betsy, but they are never asked without us, Richard and I are often at dances too without them, as people who have young girls living with them sometimes get a little music from the Regiments, when any of the officers dine with them and so make up a dance without much formality [? word faded] (6) to be sure Richard has a little lead in his heels and we can't often persuade him to dance but he is very fond of going amongst the mirth of that sort, and is a great beau at handing the Ladies, this he does with a great air I assure you, I do not think you would know him if you were to see him, he is grown so tall and so stout. If you get the Brown beads from the India House²⁵ without any trouble I wish you would show them to Mrs. Toussaint and tell her that I think she could introduce them very prettily for Court.

They look beautifully with yellow or pink croze, they are very cheap here, so if she should think them worth sending for, she can have them in less than a year from the time of writing, and I can send her a bag full at any time I beg you to remember me moost [sic] kindly to the Bromptonians I hope Lizzie and Mary will receive their two long tailed gowns safe I stiched [sic] them up without cuting [sic] the muslin to cheat the Custom house officers.

With kind remembrance to all friends I remain my dear Hetty,
Your sincerely affectionate, sister

M. Symonds

²⁴ The Royal Menagerie at Exeter Exchange (known popularly as Exeter Change).

²⁵ East India House, London

Madras, March 18th
1802

Letter_012_MS_XX-1802: Mary Gwillim to her Hester James (no date or signature) 1802 (in pencil)] (Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 58r-61v)

(1) My Dearest Hetty,

We are unexpectedly favoured with an opportunity of letting you know that we are all in the Land of the living. It is not usual for ships to leave this place at this time as they generally experience very bad weather off the Cape, but the Commander of the Anna is the chief owner and is unwilling to lose time. Richard Clarke complains sadly of writing by her and almost wishes she had not called here for he does not think it form to write two letters for one and we are in hourly expectations of the Fleet from England, by which we hope to receive large packets of good news, we are as you may suppose all on tiptoe. Since I wrote to you we have changed our house, that we were in was in a low situation and at a good distance from the Sea shore so we found it too warm for this season [words crossed out], (April May and June being the hottest [sic] months) The house we are now in is a mile farther from the Fort than that we left; it has a good garden and it commands a very fine view of the sea, and all the Ships as they go out, or come in; we came to this place the begining [sic] of April and since we have been here I have not been at all oppressed by the heat. Betsy has been much better (2) than she was in the cool weather, and we are all in very good health. We have not yet experienced much of the Land wind, that is reckoned the most unpleasant, but it is by no means unhealthy, it is a hot dry wind, instead of cooling when it blows upon you it feels as if a hot Iron was passing close by you, it makes one's hair curl like a fury, and one's skin feel like old parchment; when these winds set in they are quite regular blowing from four or five oclock in the morning till 2 or 3 in the evening, ~~when~~ at which time it changes to a fine refreshing sea breeze; the Land wind season does not last above a month or six weeks, in general. Richard and I walk out almost every evening, sometimes on the beach it is a very fine sand but not so hard as the sand at Barmouth,²⁶ consequently not so pleasant, for it fills our shoes, and, as our feet sink, it increases the fatigue very much, which is no desireable [sic] thing in this Climate, we dine at 4 oclock, and live just as we did in England

²⁶ A town in Wales.

only we go to Bed, and rise, a little earlier and have half a hundred Black men about the House, who do not wait upon us quite as well, as two maids and a man would do in England. When I have teased [sic] my brains with explaining something or other in Black English (which I assure you is a very different Language from that you speak) have had an hours hard conversation **(3)** (The man I have been talking to [word crossed out] seeming attentive and desirous of acquainting himself with the subject,) but he tells me at last that he is not a proper person for that business; must be another one [?] man he bring if mistress please and then she can explain. I have got a shoe-maker at work for me I will tell you how I am forced to manage him, in the first place he must have money advanced to buy the last and the leather; now if I were to trust him out of my sight I should never catch him again, so he sits under a Mango tree in the garden and boils his pot under another (that is his rice) which he is allowed 2 fanams²⁷ a day for; his task is to make two pair in a day which he can do with ease as they are wretchedly slight, but that is of no consequence for it is only the white leather that is wearable; the black has an odious smell and the other colours they dye so ill that they are not fit to be seen; except one, which is intended for red but does not resemble that colour in the least, it is however something between [sic] a brown and a purple which is not ugly, I do not think it worth your while to send us any white shoes, for tho these do not keep the shape very well, they are so cheap that one can well afford to change them often we get 5 or 6 pair for a pagoda, which is only 8 shillings, when you send things a few peices [sic] of narrow sattin [sic] ribbon will be very **(4)** acceptable particularly white; for making shoe roses and such sort of ornaments it is very dear here, and we are obliged to make all those little things ourselves, they do not carry well when made the white roses lose their colour but the ribbon comes pretty good on the block. Colourd [sic] and particularly figured shoes we shall be very thankfull [sic] for. I am sure you will say I am a troublesome correspondent for you must have a great deal of trouble to read my bad writing and when you have made it out its all a budget of commissions which you are to have the trouble to execute, and not only that but you must have the trouble to transcribe them before you can forward the letters to my mother, well have patience and go on for I have some trouble on your account, let me tell you it is as hard case enough when I have accompanied you in all your excursions [sic], assisted you in all your employments, in the nursery, in the pantry &c, &c. to have some cross grained notions come into my head, and tell me that my plan of the day may be quite wrong. I desire you will not think yourself quite alone in the Poplar walk. I pop in there too sometimes, and Finn wags his tail and thinks you stay a long time, he knows the supper will be very **(5)** late and his master will rub his

²⁷ The denomination of a small coin long in use in S. India, Malayāl. and Tamil *paṇam*, 'money,' from Skt. *paṇa*, [rt. *paṇ*, 'to barter']. (Hobson-Jobson, p. 348)

nose instead of ear, if you dont make a little haste to pick the pease; well when Lizzy and you get together over an old letter there is no end to it, and Regi; and Jemmy, may amuse themselves as they can, if they were not there, the carpet would be burnt with the ends of stick falling off the fire, not a soul left in the parlour, poor Mary faging [sic] away Mrs. W has got the child the maids are settling, the affairs of both the families in the wash house and Lizzy and you accounted for as above. Who knows if all this time you may not be at Tupsley or Willersley²⁸ with a large piece of bread got into the dairy stealing the cream off the pans, if you eat such a quantity of cream after the custards you had yesterday and the mulberries and the peaches you eat this morning you will be ill and then you must send for John Gwillim, and he may be engaged with some bin[?] thing of his own for ought I know by this time. This is sad prate to send so far, but it may give you some idea of the occupations of my brain.

I have been spending a week with my friend Mrs. Rowley at Bevedere (that is the name of her house) It is not above two miles from our own, but it is the handsomest place near Madras. The House belonged to the late **(6)** Nabob²⁹ it is very spacious and highly ornamented the grounds are well planted and handsomely laid out with a great variety of fine shady walks a river runs through the ground which makes it cool (as the winds are always cool when they blow over water whatever point they blow from) The house commands a fine veiw [sic] of the Pulicat hills which are very handsome in their form.

I do all the Gossiping Visiting and most of the Housekeeping, all the other members of the family are becoming very Learned in the Oriental Languages. Betsy is Studying the Gentoo,³⁰ Richard the Malabar,³¹ and Sir H the Persian what use they may make of them when they have acquired them I do not know Richard will indeed have sufficient use for the Language. it may be a great advantage to him; for my own part I have very little time and no inclination to attempt any more of them than the few words I pick up in my conversations with the servants &c [?]; as I have never yet been able to acquire any knowledge in my own tongue it would be great affectation in me to attempt to gabber in the Eastern ones. If I draw a few plants or Insects which differ from those of Europe **(7)** you will be glad to see them and I shall be much gratified in an opportunity of amusing you.

²⁸ Villages in Herefordshire.

²⁹ Umdat ul Umara (1748-1801), Nawab of the Carnatic.

³⁰ Telugu.

³¹ Tamil.

I am going tomorrow to spend a few days at Gen[era]l Trents. I have a great many of these kind of invitations, and when the family are all well and things seem to go on smoothly at home I think I may as well accept of some of them as it serves to make a little variety in the amusements.

I believe you do not know that I may probably have a companion arrive by the next Fleet from England. Mr Strange³² applied to Sir H to receive a natural daughter of his she was to have come out to Lady Strange if she had lived. [word crossed out] Owing to the connexion [sic] with Sir. Thos. Strange Sir H thought himself bound to receive her, she is a half Cast or what you call mulattos, which two thirds of the Girls who come out here are, some of them look pretty enough when they first arrive but when they have been here a little time without the dacing [sic: dancing] Master, they become as round backed as the natives and they get several shades darker when they have been a little time in this Climate even though they keep themselves entirely out of the sun, they are generally wretchedly educated. Strumming two or three songs, and dancing a reel is called accomplishment, you cannot think what wretched useless beings most (8) of these kind of women sink into when they have been married a few years. This letter resembles one of yours which used to amuse Betsy so much. I am now going to contradict the first part of it. The Anna did not sail when I expected it would so I laid by my letter and it will now be sent to you by a frigate which will be in England much sooner. This is shamefull [sic] paper, but I have no better. I do not think I shall write to any body else by this opportunity as I have only just heard of it and must send my letter to night but I shall edeavour [sic] to write to every body by the Anna. I reproach myself for not having written to Richard Hodges since I left home pray remember me to him his friend Clarke is much disconcerted of not hearing from him, but I hope we shall have an Epigramme [sic] at least by this next Fleet. I have paid my visit to Mrs. Trent, I was there 6 days which I spent very pleasantly. She is very mild good kind of a woman I think much such a one as Mrs Bullock but she has no children they intend going home next year. The General is quite a Cockney but a very goodnatured man and has been 36 years in this country except one visit of 3 years in England which delighted him so much that he has never been contented in this country since his return. I cannot keep this to say more but I shall write again by the same ship if she is detained, remember I

³² Perhaps James or Henry Strange, brothers of Sir Thomas Strange who both spent time in India.

[unsigned letter ends here] **Letter_017_MS_10-1802: Mary Symonds Hester James, Madras Oct. 2? 1802 (in pencil)] (Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff.84r-85v)**

[167/84 noted on bottom of page]

(1) My Dear Hetty,

I sit down to write a few lines to you, as I will never miss an opportunity, but I think you very [?] probably receive other letters &c (which will be sent by us some days hence) before this; as we shall then have a charming [?] opportunity of sending, by the Kings Ships, which have been stationed here the greatest part of the war, and are now ordered home as [?] to be relieved. The gentleman who carries this is a Mr. Samuel, he is an Attorney [sic] here, & the Editor of the Madras Gazette, he had the misfortune to marry a sister of Miss Wells the Actress, she has behaved very ill it is said in England, and it is whispered here that the (purpose?) of this Voyage is to get divorced from her, & to bring his children out here, who have been schooling in England. I have the satisfaction to say we are all pretty well Betsy is always a little nervous, as she used to be in England, We have at present a very pleasant house, & quite full of company, Mr & Mrs Edward Hargrave, & Mr W^m Hargrave, who are just arrived by the Admiral Aplin; the gentlemen are sons of Mr. H_ of Boswell Court.³³ The Eldest was in the country 5 or 6 years. He went home for his health & then met the Lady, he has married, for the con- (2) sideration of, some say, 7 & others 17, thousand pounds, which she possessed; by the help of rouge & false hair her face looks pretty enough, but as the song says, she is 'badly warped in the back' [?], she was a miss French of the city. I dare say James knows the name, she has been at a ball last night, I got her acquainted with plenty of smart young men, for partners, & she seemed quite delighted in the Indian gaiety, & Indian Gallantry. I wrote to Nancy Green a little time since & told her a great lye [sic] viz I said I had sent you some drawings, & a letter, by that same ship & I intended to do it, when I wrote to her, but unfortunately I sent them too late, I shall send them to you by a very charming young man, who is now on a visit with us he is a Lieutenant in the Leopard, W^m Templer he is a nephew of Judge Bullers, & a Brother of a Mrs. - James Buller, a sweet pretty woman who lives in Serle Street, I knew her a little in England, he calls himself my Brother & I really love him as if he were so, he insists on my writing to his Sister, I am not quite sure that he would not prefer being loved in another way, but I keep him to brotherly love, on account of his youth, for he is not quite 20. & or I have an utter aversion to inequalities, my heart

³³ Boswell Court, just north of Fleet Street in London, was where Elizabeth and Henry Gwillim lived before their departure for India.

is quite safe if I were 16 I believe I should like him better for a lover as he is very good, & sensible & exceedingly handsome. I am writing you an idle prating [sic] letter but it will convince that we keep up our spirits pretty well, it is a fine (3) thing to be in a place where a little beauty goes a great way. I am very handsome here & very clever & the Lord knows what, if you cannot believe it you may blot it out or burn the letter or what you like we have suffered much on account of the parcels we expected, they are not yet arrived, & I do assure you I regret their loss more on account of the letters I hoped they would contain than on account of the finery tho really, we shall be quite satisfied if more attention is not paid to the shipping our parcels. I hope you will never again enclose letters in the parcels but send them by the open post and be sure to mention the name of the ship you send by all boxes &c. & describe what they contain. I beg to be kindly remembered to all my dear friends, & a thousand kisses to the dear little boy. I pray to god to spare him to us, perhaps he is not the less likely to continue with us for being a little weakly, for those who are quite healthy we are apt to feel too confident about but a delicate child claims our constant attention. I have just hear that Mr. W Barrol is arrived here from Bengall [sic]. I hope I shall not see any thing of that most illustrious gentleman, but I am surprised you did not mention his coming in any of your letters. I must conclude with good wishes & prayers for your happiness.

Your most affectionate Sister,

M. Symonds

Madras Oct^{er}2nd

[Continued on next page in pencil]

(4) Tomorrow is Sunday & your Birthday. I shall not forget to drink your health in a bumper. God Almighty bless you & send you many happy returns of it.

[Notes on this letter written by Hetty, sending it to their Mother:

Address: Mrs Symonds, Capuchin Lane, Hereford

My dear Mother this is a letter I received [?] from Mary I have also one from Betsy but it being large I cannot send it to you till some opportunity and I expect many more. I went by your desire about the Vein Marble but can get none at Parkers he being in want of it himself. He had promised to let me know but I have not yet had an answer. As soon as I do I will let you know all about it - this not being directed I thought I would send it - to you to divert you till I carry yet some more

This from Mary.

If I do not hear to day from Parker I will go to Westminster. James has been very poorly this last week. Yours [Hester]

**Letter_018_MS_10-1802: Mary Symonds to Esther Symonds, 3 October 1802 [in pencil]
(Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 86r-87v)**

(1)

My Dear Mother,

One of the happiest girls in the world is now writing to you, I have just received a packet of letters from Hetty, which has made me so. I finished a short letter to her yesterday but it will go in another ship, & I expect this will come to land long before it. I have but a few minutes allowed me to write this not being aware that the [word crossed out] ship would sail so soon.

Thank God we are all in good health & spirits, in my letter to Hetty which I sent by a Mr. Samuel, I mentioned my fears least [sic] the parcells she sent us were lost, but I find by her letter that we may expect them some weeks hence, indeed it may be some months but that is not material so long as they are safe, & when we hear that you are all well we are quite happy. Hetty mentions Mr. T. Gwillim being made a Post Captain,³⁴ but that I suppose must be a mistake, as he was not made a Commander when we heard last & surely rapid promotions are not usual, whatever his advance may be I sincerely wish him joy of it & hope I shall see him when we next meet with two Epaulets. It would have been very (2) gay for me if my finery had come by the Admiral Aplin, as we are to have a most splendid ball on the 7th at Lord Clives he gives in

³⁴ A rank in the Royal Navy.

celebration of the Peace & on that occasion he opens a new Banqueting house which he has just finished Building, we have a family living with us at present who are come out in the Admiral Aplin, Mr. & Mrs. Hargrave & a Brother of his. These young men's father was a neighbour of ours in Boswell Court, the one is a civilian the other a military servant of the Company. I am extremely happy that Hetty has received the things we sent by Mr. Livingstone he was introduced to us by a very good young man a shipmate of ours coming out here. I fear poor Edwards (who married Polly Ravenhill & come out when we did) is very ill he was sent up the country to an employment soon after he arrived & we heard nothing of him till the other day when Sir Henry receivd [sic] a letter from him written in a wretched trembling hand, saying that he had been very unwell & was coming down to the Coast in the hope of recovering his health, since that he sent some books to be taken care of for him but himself is not yet arrived poor creature it was a shocking thing to send such a man into this climate for by all accounts he was scarcely himself all the voyage. I cannot bear to let a ship sail (3) without some scrawl or other in it for you.

I am afraid you will think my letters very trifling as I give you no description of the Country but I think Betsy does those things better than I & besides I shall convince you soon that I am not negligent of those things; when you will receive letters & desriptive [sic] drawings of my performance. I should do more for you but as Betsy has not strength to bear much racketing I am obliged to visit for all the family for Sir H-- will never go to any Balls & had rather take his evenings nap than pay visits to the gayest Ladies here, indeed it does not agree with him to be put out of his way, at first I contested the matter a little, because I did not like to go out without him, but I have given it up now, because I see it teazes him & now I know every Lady here & am never in want of a companion. No less than 3 Ladies of my acquaintanc [sic] have fited [sic] up rooms in their houses for me, whenever I chose to spend a few days with them. indeed [sic] I find myself a great favourite here but I dont know what it is for, but I endeavour to be obliging to those who are civil to me. To be sure the girls who come out here are for the most part ignorant, pert & bold, & receive all attention as merely what is due to their beauty, tho God knows there are not 3 in the place who have the smallest pretentions [sic] to it, I have filled the paper with nonsense [sic] & must now conclude, wishing health & happiness to all (4) my dear friends. I hope God will bless & preserve all the dear little children. I am heartily sorry for poor Nancys loss of the little one; I am glad too that I had not seen it, as its loss is not so great to me. Hetty does not say how old it was when it dyed. God bless you all.

Yours most affectionately & dutifully,

M. Symonds

{October 3 & my dear Hettys Birthday)

Address: Mrs Symonds

[Note on bottom: This was intended to be sent by a ship which will not sail for some days but as opportunities are very frequent just now we don't mind these disappointments]

**Letter_020_MS_10-1802 (Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff.92r-94v), Mary Symonds [to Hester James]
October 18, 1802**

(1) Betsy has told you about the fate of our things which you put on board the Skelton Castle but we think it better that it should be mentioned in both the letters & therefore [sic] I have opened mine to put in this slip of paper Cap^{tn} Bitman says he had them on board, but they were sent without an order from the Directors, & therefore he was obliged, by an order from them, to put the things on shore again, at first he said he had written to give notice of thier [sic] being landed to the gentleman who put them on board, but afterwards he said he believed he he [sic] had written & was not sure -

The captain of the [name of ship unclear] which arrived since says he saw the cases in a warehouse at Graves End. Should you ever recover them & they are not spoiled, you may send them yet. as fashion is of much less consequence here than with you, in your letters you allude to some things they contain & we are very much obliged to you for the trouble you took in procuring them, particularly the jam & c. We have recieved [sic] your letters by the Ann & Eliza one dated September the 4th by which we have the satisfaction to hear that you have been very fortunate in recieving [sic] the things we sent by Mr. Longdell & c. but I shall answer your letters more fully by the next ship at present we have very little time as this is to sail to night & we send the letters nine miles to the post. I have written to Mr. Clarke & John Gwillim & thier

[sic] letters I enclose to you, to seal & send I doubt they will not afford you any amusement in reading **(2)** but I leave you to judge for yourself or to be determined by your leisure whether to read them or not all I can say to my friends is if they wish to hear from me I will take the trouble to say so I am quite ready to write, letters enough, such as they are for I have no pleasure equal to writing to my good friends, except reading their answers indeed you are our best friend in that way & I know not what I should do without your salutary Epistles. I gave you a direction to one of the Ashtons & I think there is another brother belonging to the Banking Devaines Daws & Noble.³⁵ I assure you the Cap^{tn} is a very fine handsome young man & is a fair way to make a good fortune, but I fear he is too much of a rattle, tho he is good nature itself. I never told you about our seeing Mr. W- Barrol he dined with us two or three times when he came round from Bengall [sic] & he really seemed to be very much improved his behaviour was quite steady and decent & I assure you he appeared to great advantage. I think it a lucky thing that these long letters of ours arrive in the latter part of the summer for otherwise you would not get time to read them. God bless you & good bye

Mary Symonds [in pencil Oct. 18, 1802]

We were all at a grand ball last night which was given by Mr. Oakes, he is a great man here being the President of the board of Revennue[sic], he is a fine Old fellow & a great beau of mine!!! The Lord love him.

[From Mary Symonds to unknown, 1802?]

(11) [sentences crossed out] Christmas in many respects is kept in Madras as May day is kept in England. The temperature of the air & the fresh verdure of the grass & trees after the rains, together with the flowers which abound in this Season enables them to do this; the whole country indeed appears extremely like England in a fine warm May, but with this advantage that they have many ripe fruits-- the Houses of the Europeans are built in the stile [sic] of Italian Villas The Entrance, if the home consists of more than a ground floor is a sort of Paiazza [sic] with an open gallery over it, with columns & if of one floor it is sometimes a Piazza & sometimes a Portico with columns, or as all these open apartments are called here a Veranda. At day break the arches of the Piazza are dressed up by the servants a plantain tree is set on each side of every arch (or opening, if it be a colonade [sic]) these trees are stripped of the lower

³⁵ Devaynes, Dawes & Noble

leaves & each forms a white Ivory looking column like a very large Elephants tooth it may be about 7 or 8 feet high & so far it runs straight, here therefore, very much resembling a capital are fastened on large branches of the plantain fruit above these the long leaves springing out bend over & meeting each other at the keystone of the Arch are then bound together with strips & bunches of flowers. These columns are then bound round with narrow wreaths of flowers of which they provide at least a hundred yards, & the tops of the Arches are filled up with them, by hanging them in festoons crossing each other, in a various (4) ways so as to produce an agreeable assemblage of lines, The floors of the Verandas [sic] & halls are strewn with flowers & small leaves so as to make almost a carpet.

During breakfast time the Servants of the family their children (boys) & all people who are employed about the house come in with presents of Fruit & flowers everyone brings something [sic] however small but flowers always make a part if not the whole. They never gather flowers as we do with stalks and leaves but carefully take off all the green for they esteem nothing but that which smells finely. Their nosegays are therefore very stiff & formal being the heads of the flowers bound upon sticks, in various fancies like the flower pots made of wax or paper & cried about the streets in London. However they often produce very rich effects, sometimes by contrasting colours & sometimes by disposing of rich fruits into the softest gradations--a nosegay for each person of the family with a lime or an orange or two is a present from a menial servant. Those of the high orders bring wreaths of flowers to wear round the neck with (Shaddock or Plantains fruit. The Nabob sent us a letter of congratulation on the return of the Season & a large present of the finest fruit with wreaths of flowers, & a relation of his also sent us a variety of fruit with long wreaths for the neck according to the common way which are about two yards long & short ones of a purple flower like violets. These flowers were threaded (as they all are for the person) by a needle & thread, like beads, but pressed close together & these purple ones are particularly beautiful for the top of the (5) flower is of a strong rich purple & the wider part has a pinkish or laylock³⁶ tint & the flowers being all threaded one way as the garland was turned about it looked changeable like a dove's neck, to relieve the purple at distances were put in two or three white flowers & a kind of tassel of the same white flowers was fixed by way of solitaire each garland has a pair of bracelets to match. The carriage horses have their heads dressed with garlands [words crossed out] as those of state carriages are with ribbons. The Coach man is also adorned. The Palanquin boys put the flowers round their necks & twist the wreaths in their turbans with so much taste that I do not at all exaggerate

³⁶ lilac.

when I say our best Milliners would be improved by seeing them. For four or five days after xmas day a set of people who call themselves Portuguese or Christians go about in the manner of the morris dancers in England. In the note relative to the painted window represented in Johnsons' Shakespear³⁷ it is said that the Hobby horse was frequently forgotten in the Morris dance. It does not appear to be introduced in the Morris dancers here [words crossed out] but the Caffer³⁸ or Moorish king riding his Hobby horse with his Horse-keeper Hookah Bedar & grass cutter form a party who go about seperately [sic]. All people who ride in this Country have a Man run by the side of the horse called the horse keeper & the great Moorish Princes have besides a grass cutter to go with them for the horse are here all fed by grass cut by women, & a Hookah Bedar that is a man who keeps his Hookah lighted & runs behind him with it, when the great Prince wants a whiff of his Tobacco their Bedar kneels down & holds it whilst he smokes through the long leather worm (6) This farce therefore represents a Moorish king riding out in state. He is attended by pipers & taborers who play whilst the others dance & in dancing offer grass to the horse & the pipe to the king whose horse is meanwhile kicking & prancing to the tune & the machinery is so well contrived that at first I really thought at a distance it was a small horse for the Moormen frequently ride little ones & they are almost as much covered by the trappings & [the profusion of draperies of various colours which the Moor men [words crossed out] delight to wear. The contrivance is a large hoop covered with trappings into which the man gets & tying it round his waist he spreads his long robes over it.

The neck of the horse is made with springs so that the man pushes it up & down ~~with~~ to represent a spirited horse. The head is well carved painted white with red marks probably intended as Crosses. They are adorned with flowers both men & horse, & a great deal of rich silk, & linen draperies. The Morris dance is a distinct sport & besides pipers and Taborers consists of eleven persons in like a tolerable burlesque dance at the Play house. There are three principal dancers the king & as they translate it to me his two ~~Ministers~~ Secretaries. These are very richly dressed particularly the King. It is a curious mixture of Christianity & Paganism for the King wears a crown like the Spanish very large & rich all of gold & with a large gold cross on the top of it. His hair is puffed out in great abundance under it & he wears robes of various

³⁷ Samuel Johnson edited *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in ten volumes with George Steevens. It was first published in 1765.

³⁸ From Arabic *kāfir* (unbeliever), in India the term was usually applied to Africans and their descendants, some of whom were converts to Islam.

colours over each other but so contrived that in dancing you see them. His upper robe is of Purple gauze fringed with gold & he has a sceptre in his hand

Letter_021_XX_XX-1802 [From Sureau Row to Jeven Row and Naugogy Row, April 21, 1802]

- Translation of a Mahartta [Maratha] Letter from Sureau [?] Row [Rao] to Jeven Row [Jeevan Rao] and Naugogy Row [Nagoji Rao] Dated at Muddiarginum [Madhyarjunam?] 21st April 1802³⁹

I dare say you have received the Letter I wrote to you informing you of the Decease of his Excellency Rajah Aumer Sing [Amar Singh] on the 18th of April⁴⁰ Since which we used every Exertion to prevent her Excellency Paurvathee Bhauhe Seib [Parvati Bhonsle] from Burning Herself who regardless to our Solicitations being resolutely determined to Execute her Intention together with Saavethree Bhauhe [Savithri Bhonsle] the Rajahs second wife answered us in the following manner It is inconsistent with you who have lived under our protection from Generation to generation to attempt impeding our Resolutions [sic] any longer being past 3 OClock

Perceiving their eagerness to accomplish their Design we considered it would prove Fruitless to persevere in our Solicitations Mr Blackburn's⁴¹ Hircars⁴² also Endeavoured to dissuade them which also proved ineffectual Having made the necessary Preparations they proceeded from the Palace at 4 OClock the Decased [sic] being carried in a Palanquin attended by His Highnesses [sic] Two Wives in their Palanquins followed by a numerous concourse when

³⁹ This is the translation mentioned by Elizabeth as having been made by her servant Sami.

⁴⁰ Raja Amar Singh (or Ameer Sing, or Ramaswami Amarsimha Bhonsle) ruled Thanjavur / Tanjore between 1793 and 1798, when he was deposed by the EIC in favour of his nephew Serfoji II (he had previously served as regent to Serfoji).

⁴¹ Captain William Blackburne (1764–1839) was the EIC Resident in Thanjavur / Tanjore. Blackburne negotiated a treaty with Amir Singh in the 1780s and later was important to brokering relations between Serfoji and the EIC. See Savithri Preetha Nair, *Raja Serfoji II: Science, Medicine and Enlightenment in Tanjore* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁴² Probably a variation on "Sircar," derived from the Persian ' Hind. from Pers. *sarkār*, 'head (of) affairs and had various uses, including for a servant in charge of domestic purchases. "Hircar" is used to refer to a servant in John Harriott, *Struggles Through Life, Exemplified in the Various Travels and Adventures* (London 1807) I, 164.

arrived at the River Veerasolum⁴³ the other side Cauvery [Kaveri River] the funeral Pile being erected on an eligible situation in the Centre of the River the Corpse was placed thereon with which the Religious obseques [sic] was not completed before 10 at night -

Her Excellency Paurvathee Bhauhe Seib taking me by the Hand said you have always proved yourselves our Friends and **(2)** and wellwishers and having been a considerable Time in our Service constantly studied our Prosperity in consequence of your attachment and fidelity to us we deliver to your Care the young Raja Pretaub Sing [Pratap Singh]⁴⁴ being Fully assured you are sufficiently Experienced to conduct all matters for his welfare and that you will do nothing to the Degradation of his late Excellencies memory so bidding [sic] Adieu to all the Spectators and mounting the Pile advised us not to be grieved in the least confiding that the Hon^{or}ble Company would render their Protection with respect to the young Rajah and all that were attached to the late Rajah would no doubt study the happiness of the young One then giving the last farewell [sic] to the Surrounding Multitude composedly lay down with her Husband on the Pile which was set on fire as soon as the Religious Rites were performed -

Immediately after His Excellencies second Wife Sauvetre Bhauhe threw herself into a a Firy [sic] Pit which was prepared adjoining the Funeral Pile at that instant the Crowd burst into Tears whose grief was inexpressible and which was testified by the most lamentable Cries being astonished at the Queens undaunted resolution being about one OClock when they returned to the Palace after which the Rajahs relations and Frainds [sic] afforded every consolation in their Power to his Excellencies surviving Wife Bauvanee Bhauha Seib [Bhavani Bhonsle] and plased [sic] the proper Guards around the Palace-

Soon after Captain Blackburn arriving at the palace expressed his sorrow that the ladies were not restrained from Burning themselves slept in his Palanquin the remainder of the night outside the Palace called at the Burning Place in the morning appeared much affected by the sight and expressed his sorrow for the loss of the Rajah &c Then returned to the Palace to pay a visit to the Queen his late Excellencies surviving spouse the young Rajah Pretau Sing come **(3)** out and saluted him and the Captains asking him who am I he said you are Mr: Blackburn which

⁴³ Possibly the Vennar or Vennaaru river.

⁴⁴ Pratap Singh was Amar Singh's son. According to a letter to him from Edward Clive, dated 2 September 1802, he received support from the Madras Presidency after his father's death (*Records of Fort St George, Country Correspondence, 1802* (Madras: Government Press, 1909) no. 37, p. 29). However, he was not the ruler of Tanjore, as implied here.

very much pleased the Captain who made professions of Consolation to the Queen and advised her not to give way to grief that the Hon^{or}ble Company take care of an protect her and Family agreeable to their wish. Her Highness answered that the Rajah previous to is Death assured her that she need not be under any apprehensions [sic] but rest confident that the Hon^{or}ble Company would render her and Family their Protection take care of an treat them with the Respect due to Their Rank and Dignity The Captain then taking the young Prince on his knee promised him and his Royal Mother that the Hon^{or}ble Company would render them Comfort by their Protection and attention and recommended her frugality in her Expenditure during the young Rajahs Minority Her Highness directed me to write to you informing you of these Proceedings and also to the Rajahs friends [sic]. Requesting them to look to the welfare and dignity of the young Prince She wishes one of you would come to Muddiargenum as the seeing of you in her Misfortunes would afford her some Consolation

Letter_022_MS_XX-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 97r-99v) Mary Symonds to Reginald Whitley, Madras, 6 February 1803

(1) 1803

(2) My Dear Regi

I sending your Honour too many salams so fine eshiol you send, I thinking master taking too much trouble to keep so fine name, I directly make sigiram send Bullock bandy get Blacktown dirt, some river esand , Bullock make trouble that sake never come soon, I telling, what for so long time coming, you very well understand at fast pive oclock evening time that's (frofer?) time, this countries custom, never keep in grownn eshiol hot time that sake tomorrow morning too esoon get up before hot time coming.

This time all eshiol I keep in ground, some eshmall eshmall thus come very fine, I go see evening time; by & by tomorrow morning, maistrie coming tell, some one, one. Esort eshmall tree little esleeping, I directly go see woun eyes I tinking one too parsley tree some

esallady tree too much esleep, that sake, after I thinking never come life, Maistrie,
(telling/letting?).

Let's take it **(3)** out she says, put more eshiol, indeed much pleasure this kind business, Auyah I
call come keep in hand eshmal bag Auyah all day sit down sit down to esmoke Charoot, then I
send Dobashe directly bring fine new Chattee, this so fine eshid, must keep some fine tree.

Good eshmell, in Chattee, near to Mrs rooms, that Veranda can looking too much pretty, this
chit, I send (tassall?), because I thinking this good pleasure, Master can understand all this thing,
plenty good water Mrs's Garden got very fine tank, besides three wells, I give order, some
(handall?) keep over Europe tree hot time, because too much sun comeing so eshmall tree never
keep life, So soon I see eshmall bags one minute I call Gardener Maistrie, he espeake this some
China name can very well understand, that sake I tell Misalgee go bring China man, make
eexplain misalgee come back, China man can't find; in this place not one person can understand
name that eshmall bags; hear to Mrs's Garden one fine Tope, all Cocaa-nut tree, very handsome,
only that place too many Esnig near to that Tope one nulla that sake Esnig never come Mrs's
Garden very seldom Esnig come in water, Bad Esnig never **(4)** come, Only Jackall come night
time near to godown making to much noise, Mrs sometimy get up call Seapoy, send away, One
time is coming one, one esort large cat, kill away fowl some sheep, Mrs can very well
understand that Cat because Mrs got book Dr. Anderson giving (Buffon?) book that sake Mrs
telling Palanqueen Boys kill away that Cat, then after Mrs draw picture Mrs espeak name Lynx.
After Mrs draw picture too much bad eshmell coming Palanqueen boys keep ready (Messal?)
when Mrs. throw away cat, directly make Currie after that Palanqueen Boys' telling that Cat
currie too much nice. all they eat for supper. Suppose

Master Regi taking little trouble. I thinking can find this good sence letter, suppose Master
never find then I thinking Lizzy, Mary, Mama will find Grandmama I thinking never get sence
in head this countries espeaking, Master Regi garden i never see all different sort chillies only
one two esort no any more, when I come Europe I think I take little walk in Garden dayly every
day once a day. I never find how Master Regi get muster so fine China name to keep that
eshmall bag, **(5)** This paper I writing; some one (Block/Black?) man espeak Lawyer Gentleman
alway custom telling that Lawyer; Master must draw paper (fuzzle?) nother (Turney?), now, I
think after too much troubl I take, Master Regi never make fuzzle, thats sake I telling Mrs must
make little Gentoo writing; I send one (Cajun?), if Master never fid that Cajan writing, then must

keep on more, looking Glass; now I finding this (fun?) very bad fun, so I take leave & run away going, but if Master make hungry upon me directly cut off ears, cut him neck estrong wound

I am Honourable Sir

Your Honours most oldest daughter
& very faithfull servant
Mongataiya Feranostate

Madras February 6th, 1803

**Letter_023_MS_02-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 100r-103v) Mary Symonds to Hester James,
Madras February 7th, 1803**

(1) Letter 1st

Madras February 7th, 1803

My Dearest Hetty

We have receivd by the Scelton [sic] Castle which arrived here on the 23 of Jan,^y Mr. James's letter containing a mixture of good & Ill news. I must own that from the earliest accounts I reciev'd [sic] from my Mother & you of the dear little boy, I never flattered myself with the hope of seeing him, he was too delicate from the first. Let us not, unreasonably, lament the loss of such dear little creatures since the most fortunate of human beings, must acknowledge that he who dies early escapes from more sorrow, than all the pleasures this world can bestow, will reward him for enduring. We reciev'd [sic] at the same time two very pleasant letters from Lizzy & Mary Thoburn & a basket of Seeds from Regi he has been at his old wags tricks, & lettered all the bags of flower seed with an imitation of Chinese characters; in return for his kindness I have written [sic] him a letter in what we call Black English that is precisely as the servants & all the natives speak I think he will have a little trouble to

make it out. What in the world put it into your noodle that Mr. Thos. Gwillim was made a post Captain. Sir Henry received a letter from his father with a very different account of him & this puts me in mind to give you another wig,⁴⁵ you have a smart stroke at me for not dating my letters in your last & that very letter you date May the 16-1801. now I have you Mrs. saucy [lass?---cut off--]. I hope you will have seen my friend (2) Mr Templer long before you see this, I wish much to hear of his arrival & his fellow passengers the Ridgeons [?].

If the climate &c of England does not alter him you will find him a most agreeable acquaintance, but young men sometimes get their heads turned with too much attention particularly coming from this country where all favours are conferred by the Ladies. I beg you will be particular in telling me how he behaves to you, you will see what familiar terms we were on here by the ridiculous stuff I wrote by him. The last fortnight he was with us was all spent in romps & play to be sure I ought to have been better employed in writing long epistles to my friends at home & collecting things for thier [sic] amusement, but as such a friend as Templer will not often be met with nor so much mirth be likely to be repeated I do not much regret it.

The gayety & Show of India of which one hears so much in England have very little variety in them. The amusement always ~~always~~ consists of a great dinner at 8 oclock and a great ball in the evening at these one always meets the same set of people who do not care one farthing for each other & the one half of them are wishing each other hanged; one hears the same scandal at all, & in general one sees the same fine cloaths, & here are some Ladies on whom you would think it snowed pearles & rained diamonds, yet when you learn their secret history you find their husbands are over head & ears in debt, & that they have half a dozen children at home whom they chose to be separated from & to leave unprovided for; rather (3) than to abate of some ostentatious extravagance which all thier [sic] acquaintance know they cannot afford & therefore [sic] condemn them for indulging themselves in. A what folly is this. Here has been a fine hue & crie [sic] this last 3 months some of the foolish people about the Government ~~Now~~ chose to oppose the authority of the Judges by military force but they have brought them upon their marrow-bones & I believe no such attempt will ever be made here again, it has however cost poor Sir Henry & Sir Thos. Strange a great deal of anxiety & fatigue, but nothing can be more complete than thier [sic] victory. We are all on tiptoe expectations of a new Governor. The present Lord Clive is a very good natured man but in the affairs of the Government he is a mere

⁴⁵ A severe rebuke or scolding, ? originally from a 'bigwig'; an act of wiggling *n. slang or colloquial* (OED).

child & knows no more what is doing than I do, he is extremely fond of Gardening, & the natives who have a good deal of humour call him Gardener Maistrie, just as the people at home call the King Farmer George-

Mr. James made a great mistake in the time of celebrating Sir Henry's birth day, but that is no matter he may keep it right next time it is the 3rd of July, but all days are equally proper for a good jollification & the kind intention is every thing on these occasions.

Poor Betsy is never out of trouble for if you gets dead subjects to draw from they become offensive before she can finish the work to her mind, & when the birds are brought in alive they stare, or kick, or peck, or do some vile trick or other that frightens her out of her wits, sometimes she thinks the birds look sick, that is whenever they stand quiet & then in a great fit of tenderness she lets them fly before they (4) are finished, least thier [sic] sufferings should be revenged upon her or their ghosts should come flying round her & flapping thier [sic] great wings, scare her to death. These are serious troubles I assure you. But we do all we can to remedy such evils & have now got a venerable looking old Moor man who catches a bird at a time he holds them in proper attitudes or feeds these miserable captives in a proper manner, for her poor concience [sic] sake, now you will think all must be right & the drawing going on bravely but it is no such thing, for when she is prepared & the drawing implements are all arranged, this wicked servant & his bird are missing they are perhaps retired to some distant hovel to smoake [sic] a pipe or drink a little arack [sic] together for for my part I think this world is quite full of trouble!!

We have now a large Old Kite who was caught last night & is kept in swadling [sic] cloaths the Old man has a curious method of securing their wings & their claws he takes a round piece of cloth and makes a hole in the middle of it big enough to thrust the birds head throug [sic] he then gathers the edges of this garment together round the bottom of the birds body & ties them close with a string, beside this we have six or eight large Cranes & Storks fastened by thier [sic] legs in different parts of the garden these great long long legged things are 3 or 4 feet high, they eat (5) fish and frogs by hundreds. The bird catchers always bring them blindfolded; then there is a cock & hen Pheasant of a curious kind, who occasion much sorrow & trouble by thier [sic] disorderly behaviour for this Rascally cock pecks his wife & uses her so ill that Betsy has at last been obliged to have articles of separation drawn & each has now a house & establishment to himself, but this is nothing we have blue Pidgeons & green Pidgeons partridges of different sorts & Quails a great Cassowary, & dried Skins of birds in all corners of the house, but I suppose you will see all thier [sic] pictures in time if we have the good fortune we hope for, as I assure you

that is her principal motive for taking all this pain to collect them, & I sincerely hope she will have health to go on with this kind of amusement as such an employment will make the time we are absent from you seem much shorter but as I am about it I think I ought to mention the rest of our live stock I believe I told you of our dog Vipary [?] who is an exact resemblance of Finn. I have now another which was given me quite young by Gen^l Trent & I have taken great pains to rear it indeed it promised to be very pretty & they told me it would not grow very large so in compliment to Mr. Templer, when he went away, I called its name Tyger, but I suppose owing to too much care in feeding him he is grown so large so prodigiously ugly & rough that he ought more properly (6) to be called bear however all the servants are extremely fond of him & say he is thier [sic] good centry [sic], we have no cats they are very scarce of no use & very ugly. We have two Bullocks which are very usefull [sic] animals. They carry heavy burthens [sic] to & from the Fort and bring manure for the garden & do abundance of business, we have just added 4 fine cows to our stock which a Gentleman has been so good to send Sir Henry from the Northward, and as they are all in the family way we may expect an increase of calves heads & if it please God to send me an increase of brains (I guess by the brightness of my writing) you will not think it amiss.-

but how will my concience [sic] be satisfied if I don't fill the paper with some note or other & I like you to be acquainted with all particulars-

I could write a good deal more such stuff as the preceeding [sic] if I had time but I am just told that the packet will close to nigth [sic] & therfore [sic] must close this, & I fear if this is really the case, I shall not be able to write to any other friends tho I wish it very much, particularly the Thoburns & Nancy Green, however I hope soon to be able to take up the pen again, as several ships are expected round from Bengall but they are particularly late this Season you must give my kind love to those friends & make my excuses for me, I have written a (7) a [sic] a really long letter to Templer & a foolish one to Master Regi. I am going to a fine Ball tonight Mrs. Rowley has got a little girl who is to be Christened, to be sure my ornaments &c make rather an old fashioned appearance but I suppose the new ones will come (as the Black people say) some time, any time, no time, pray remember me a thosand [sic] & a thousand times to every kind friend, except George Samuel, & John Gwillim, they are two scrubby fellows who never take any notice of us, by the by, you don't say a word about that Mr. J_ G_ how did he behave to you in Hereford? I have a great mind to commence a correspondence with him surely he will take the trouble to answer me. I cannot endure to think myself on bad terms with a person I like so much, particularly being absent from him, you know I always looked upon him

as a brother & I really felt the same as you for him as if he were so-I beg my kind love to Mr. James, & Ned, & Mr. Thos. James, & I commission you to give them 20 kisses each at convenient opportunities, you may say most any thing you please to George Samuel but pray let this reward be proportioned to his merit if he has written to us say a great many pretty words to him & you may add a kiss if you have no objection, but if he has not written (8) scold him well & give him a thump & a good thump on the scone, for Betsy wrote him a long letter & I wrote him an absurd prim quizzzy one, but that was the first, he shall have a better next time. Betsy, sits opposite me drawing & the old man is employed to turn about in proper attitudes an extraordinary kind of animal which was killed yesterday in Dr. Andersons Garden, our noses are terribly [sic] regaled by the scent of it, but it is very curious so we must have its picture 'tis something like a dog, & somthing [sic] like a Cat, & somthing [sic] like mouse, it has a beautifull [sic] black fur, & a long tail, half a dozen doctors have been consulted & five hundred books hunted over but no one can discover the name of this wonderful brute!! but every one rejoices in his downfall as he is known by the natives to be a sad devourer of cocoa nuts & other fruit.

I shall sit scribbling on till it is too late to send my letters, if I do any more, so God bless you all, & grant you health & happiness thus we may one day meet together & talk over these matters round a cheerful fire.

Madras, Feb 4th 1803.

I have dated both pieces this time.

Letter_024_MS_02-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 104r-106v), Mary Symonds to Hester James, February 7 1803

My Dear Hetty, Letter 2^d

Feb 7 1803 (in pencil)

As the Wellesly did not sail as soon as it was expected I avail myself of the opportunity to add a few more lines of scribble. Notwithstanding the disastrous fate of the things you intended us to have recieved [sic] by the Skelton Castle, I hope you will not be quite

disheartened from sending us a few things at convenient opportunities a few articles of milinery [sic] some trinkets which are not very valuable a few gloves & above all some shoes but not white ones, you will be so good to send some white ribbon of different widths every time as it is very much esteemed here but it will not keep. I shall be obliged to you to send one or two cakes of Reeves's⁴⁶ Carmine & one of Gaul stone⁴⁷ & a few brushes, we cannot get any brushes here that are usable. G- Samuel thought we should find the China brushes & colours useful & therefore [sic] we sent for some but they are quite useless. One or two Straw & Chip Bonnets will be very acceptable untrimmed whenever you send. They will pack inside each other & take little room. I am wretchedly in want of a pair of earrings.-I am very much obliged by a request you made me, to send you my picture, but here has not been any artist who painted minitures [sic] for a long time, & when any one comes, tho' he be thought but a bungler at home, he expects an immense [sic] price, therefore [sic] I believe I must beg you to wait till I am clever enough to do it myself, to be sure it is not easy to know one's self in any respect, but in general our own representations are as good as any that are made of us. To be sure, at my age I cannot be expected to improve in my looks nor do I think myself one bit the handsomer for a great many very fine crows feet which are added to my face since I left you. A Capt. Ashton has lately become very intimate with us he introduced himself to Sir Henry, as having known that part of his family who settled in Lancashire. I believe he is from that County or Cheshire he says he has a Brother who lives I think in Wood Street & is something (2) in the [word crossed out] house of Aines & Co. in Cheap-side I wish you or James would make a point of finding out what he is & get acquainted with him if you can his name is Arther Ashton, & I wish very particularly to know all you can possibly find out about his connexions This brothers name is Richard he is a Capt in his Majestys 12th Regiment, I suspect he has been a great pickle, but perhaps if you get acquainted with the one in London you may find out the whole history of this one I beg you will not neglect this request & let me know something about him by the first opportunity. In this place one's acquaintance consists of God know who here are some very fine folks who talk very magnificently & hold thier [sic] heads vastly high yet those who have been in England & made a point of enquiring, tell such curious histories that you would be much surprised to hear them Some of the great men have been strolling Players some have run away from thier [sic] crediters [sic] & some, I believe have run away

⁴⁶ William Reeves (c. 1739–1803) of London, England, is credited for inventing around 1781 the first watercolor cakes, blocks of watercolor paint that are shaped and dried.

⁴⁷ The pigment known as gallstone, was a deep-toned yellow.

from something worse, here have been parsons who were never ordained, & some of the Barristers come out common Soldiers, & these are the sort of people who give themselves the greatest airs and puff most about thier [sic] families, one of the ladies who is at the head of the Society is the daughter of a Taylor another who gives herself the greatest airs in the place came forth from a Gin Shop, & I do assure you thier [sic] manners are not at all superior to thier [sic] former state. You mention Mr. Livingstones brother, we did not even know he had a brother, pray what is he? Mr. L-- was only introduced to us by a letter from (3) letter 2 one of our ship mates of whose history we know no more than his, only he appears to be one of the best creatures in the world, his name is Dove, a Scotch man & a Surgeon on this establishment, he was particularly kind to Betsy on the voyage & she has continued to correspond with him ever since, his letters are extremely entertaining giving an account of all the countries through which he has passed, he has been chiefly in the Mysore country, Betsy preserves his letters with an intention of sending them home some time or other as they will afford some amusement to you & my mother & give you quite a history of the places, you see I only intended to add half a sheet to my letter, but one thing seems to spring out of another & I could go on for ever just as if I was chating [sic] with you, only I feel rather depressed when I consider how long it will be before I hear your answers to my wise prate. I have been very busy drawing some more such fine figures as I sent you by Templer-- but this set is for Sir T. Strange & he has requested me make him some little sketches from a book which was translated by Sir William Jones he is going to send it home as a present to his sister in law & this I have had the presumption to undertake.⁴⁸ I had made some which he saw & admired so much that he begged them, some time or other I shall send you something of the same kind, indeed I give away all my (4) things as fast as I do them. When I am improve [sic] a little I shall send G-- Samuel something but I am quite mad at myself for not being able to do Sky's & back grounds, & it is very hard work to find things out without any instruction. The Girls who are educated for this country either learn very little or when they come here they think of nothing but husbands, for none of them do any thing worth looking at or are capable of giving one the smalest [sic] assistance I do not see any thing they do well except dancing & making

⁴⁸ Sir William Jones (1746-94) was a Puisne Judge in Bengal and is best known for his work on Indo-European languages and for founding the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The translation referred to here is probably Jones' version of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the celebrated fifth-century drama by Indian playwright Kālidāsa. Jones's translation, entitled *Śakuntalā; or, The Fatal Ring* and published in 1799, was so popular among Western scholars that, in the next seven years, it was reprinted three times in Britain and retranslated into French, German, and Italian. One of Mary's illustrations, entitled "Scene from a Sanskrit drama," is preserved in the South Asia Collection, PIC106.

watch ribbons for the young men, who give them pearles & diamonds &c in return & many of them have no more decency than to accept of them, I have seen a girl here whom I have been very slightly acquainted with sit down & tell me that a string of pearles & diamond locket she had on was given her by one man who made love to her, her diamond brooch by another her bracelets by a third, one emerald ring by a fourth a diamond ring by a fifth & so on as far as nine or ten, & I know that some of the young men who gave them to her are nearly ruined by extravagance & have spoken with regret of the sums they have ~~sacrificed~~ expended upon this girl. This method of making the most of themselves occupies most of thier [sic] attention, but this finery don't look quite so genteel to our old fashioned eyes as to theirs who have had a proper education for the situations they fill. (5) I suppose Mr. Temple calls upon you pretty often as he always mentions you in his letters to his son. I assure you Temple is a very fine young man and I really believe as good as possible. here are very less who have been so well educated or who have in any respect such proper notions, I hope he will get on in this profession & be a comfort to his father who is as honest & as good a man as ever breathed. I supposed Mr. Clarkes Scotland plan is gone off as Richard has not yet recieved [sic] any letter from thince [sic] you would be very much surprised to see Richard I do not think you would know him at all he is grown such a tall stout young man, but his face does not look fat in proportion to his body & limbs but that is owing to his fine long chin, the servants all call him Chinner Darah, which signifies little-master, or young master, but we think the name as it sounds, very appropriate. Our gardens are of this time in perfection for vegetables we have every day abundance of green peas french beans young potatoes very fine Sallads Carrots turnips & sevelal [sic] sorts of greens, all this you will think very fine whilst you are choeking [sic] over a dirty coal fire, & glad to put up with a good pease pudding or a dish of meally potatoes, but our sorrows come on as yours go off & in May & June when you are refreshed by every beautious [sic] flower & fine temperate weather we are scorched up with a burning land wind & have scarcely a (6) blade of grass left in exposed situations it is here we have then fine fruits to relieve us & the trees are always green, but most people have thier [sic] skins not only scorched but covered with that vile tingling disorder the prickly heat, and great boils I think myself the luckiest [sic] creature in the world never to have felt any of these teasing complaints. & am quite singular in not having had any fever or any disorder whatever, by way of seasoning to the Climate. I am howevr [sic] very thankfull [sic] for my good fortune & am not so presumptuous as to expect to escape for ever tho here are some instances of persons who have come here with very good constitutions & have taken good care of themselves who have lived here to an old age without a days illness. I want one of my mothers letters very

much as she gives me a description of the Tupsley family.⁴⁹ how are all the young ones & is any increase expected? I suppose you have soldered up all this kind of news in the tin case, once more God bless you all & good by for this time.

Yours ever affectionately,

M. Symonds

I hope Ned and Nancy do not take it amiss that I do not write to them but I consider these letters as much to one as the other.

Letter_030_MS_XX-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 122r-127v), Mary Symonds to Hester James n.d. [1803]

(1) 1803 (in pencil)

My Dear Hetty,

Yesterday I had the pleasure of seeing several agreeable [sic] epistles from English friends. Sir Henry recieved [sic] them by a ship which arrived here from the Cape, the letters were put on board her by an Indiaman which was detained there; amongst the letters is a very short one from you, in which you mention poor James's illness, we are happy to find however that he is in a recovering way. Alas! poor Billy! why would you be so hasty? to swallow plumbs & stones. I know he has a good digestion & therefore [sic] hope he is recovered, but I sincerely pity you who having been confined [sic] to a sick chamber attending an illness which could not be avoided were alarmed & fatigued by one so foolishly obtained. Betsy has the pleasure of receiving [sic] a very lively letter from my mother, who appears by her writing to be as well as we wish her. Mr. William Cam mentions her as being remarkably so--you will perhaps think I am troublesome in mentioning all these letters, but my reason is that the ship I write by will sail tomorrow & therefore [sic] Sir H & Betsy will not have time to address them all & it will be some satisfaction

⁴⁹ In reference to Mary's sister Ann James and her husband, referred to as Ned and Nancy below.

to the writers to hear that they are come to hand, so I shall tell you that we have one from (2) Mr. Gwillim one from Ned James one from Master Tom one Mrs. Shepheard one Mrs Hargreave, they are all nearly of the same date; the latter end of September. Sir H. has a letter from Mr. Clarke but poor Richard has none, indeed they do not write to him as often as they should considering how anxious he is about them & how good & regular he is in writing he could not help crying yesterday when he found he had no letter, but it is his aunt's silence he complains of most, because he says she is fond of writing, & has not so many engagements as his mother. I wish you could see with what glistening eyes we all meet round a packet of letters. I have little news for you but thank God we are all very well. I hope you have recieved [sic] by Mr Templer some representations of Hindoo draperies &c. and I have now sent some specimens of the materials which form these graces [?]. I promised Nancy Green the Chowleys,⁵⁰ & I have added to them a piece of muslin which is called the Cloth & forms the other part of a Hindoo Lady's dress I have also collected some of the ornaments worn by these lovely damsels & I think the bracelets will give you a fine idea of jewelry, however they will serve to help you in forming a notion of the (3) smallness and delicacy of the hands over which they pass, some of these are the largest size they make & yet I doubt if amongst your friends you find one who can put on & off a pair of them. The young girls fill thier [sic] arms half way with them, but they have a great many more varieties one sort which they are very fond of is made of glass like the rings which were worn in England a few years ago. They have them of every colour. These are not the ornaments of rich people, they are only worn by those who cannot afford a sufficient quantity of gold silver & jewels. I suppose you will be acquainted with Mr. Prosser the chief mate of the United Kingdom he has been so good as to undertake to carry home many things for me. he was introduced to us by a letter from Mr. Mrs. Cam he is related to Mr Powel, who is Harleys partner I have sent by him some more drawings for your amusement, & Betsy intends sending some more shawls to be divided amongst her male friends for waistcoats. I think you will like the pattern of the shawl & it will have a good chance of arriving in proper time for the winter.

Betsy has sent a little box with some small bottles of atter [sic]⁵¹ & my friend Capt. Ashton who helped her to pack them, has writen [sic] his own name on one of them, from which perhaps you will (4) immagine [sic] him to be a pretty little fellow but I assure you 'tis no such

⁵⁰ Possibly "cholis," blouses worn under a sari.

⁵¹ Attar, an essential oil.

thing he is as tall & stout as John Gwillim & just such a rattle brain. Mr. Templer knows him, but he is grown vastly steady since he has been appointed to the copper mines.

You asked me in one of your letters what sort of pickles would be most desirable & I assure you that Mr James's notion was very right for I have never seen a red cabbage since I came into this country. I have been told they grow in India but it is not hereabouts, wallnuts [sic], cauliflowers & mushrooms are never to be had here except what are sent from England & capers are always sent out. I am very happy to have the pleasure of telling you that some of the things you have had the trouble of sending are arrived The box of milenary [sic] sent from Mrs Toussaints is all come in perfection every thing as fresh as when it was packed. we find it a very usefull [sic] supply for I assure you we were become very shabby in spight [sic] of all our economy. The box contained two cloaks, two turbans, two undress caps, 2 bonnets & fancy hat & some flowers & a set of green combs, which I think truely such valuable ornaments as those are very acceptable (5) to me. Betsy likes a good cap & so do I, now & then but these things make a variety & look light & pretty Betsy says I look better in thim [sic] then [sic] in a more formal dress. She is praying & wishing one wig had come, but there I do not agree with her, for if only one had come it would certainly have been torn to pieces in scrambling who should have it. one's hair is much a torment here it will not curl. We were quite surprized [sic] to see our old acquaintance the wire bonnet come in fashion again I look at Betsy in hers & fancy myself in Thanet place⁵² this just what was worn whin [sic] we were there, I am very greatly obliged to you for your beautiful long letter of the 6th of Oct,^r 1802. it gave us all great pleasure for your letters are so satisfactory, from them I always know exactly how you are going on pray tell James he is a scurvey fellow to think I shall marry a black man, when here is such choice of white ones to be had, however as he seems to have set his heart on having some little black nephews to nurse, I will try to accomodate [sic] him with a few for if I ever marry it is more than probable there will be a few ready. who shall be sent over for his amusement. without loss of time, I will enquire into (6) the matter very soon. The Hindoo dress I have sent you will perhaps imagine [sic] to be made of stuff which will not wash from the appearance of the weaving but that is not the case I wished you to see it in its present state or else I would have had it worked, it

⁵² Thanet place in London was near the Inns of Court at Fleet Street, Mary and Elizabeth probably spent time there when Henry Gwillim was being trained as a lawyer.

would thin [sic] be a very nice muslin it is the way they weave all the thin muslins here it has much the look of Chamblee.⁵³ Mrs. Toussaint entrusted our parcels to a Mr. Anderson of the

Castle Eden & Mr J-- wrote me a letter saying that Mr. Anderson would take charge of some polampores⁵⁴ & some stuff which I had bought for his mother; so I took the opportunity of putting [sic] in one for you which I have distinguished from hers by two small leather directions sewed on them, & lest they should be torn off by accident I have also written [sic] your name & mine in ink on the Edge in two or 3 places I am very much obliged to George Samuel for getting [sic] the things for me I hope I shall receive them safe, Poor fellow! he is all goodness, I am truly sorry to hear of the sad state his mother is in for tho' in the course of nature she cannot last long it must be very distressing to him to see her suffer & linger (7) he is indeed a good man, & I am sure he has been a very kind friend to us, I grieve I have not found it in my power to draw something tolerably well to send him but I hope I shall improve & I certainly shall not forget any English friend. Since I began this Richard Clarke has received [sic] one letter from his father dated St Andrews 21st Sept,^r 1802. I shall send you a fan made of flowers which I have [sic] dried in the sun if it falls to pieces it cannot be helped for they are only intended for one evening The natives send them to us almost every day with long garlands to wear round the neck, & bracelets for the arms, & many other inventions by which they perfume themselves. I did not understand your observations about Nancy Green having sent out a black which would not be admired, but your last letter seems to explain that you alluded to her picture, whereas I thought you meant that she had dressed up a black doll to shew the fashions & I answered to it accordingly. I do not agree with you in thinking Nancy has any disadvantage owing to this circumstance for should she ever pay us a visit as I hope she one day will, it will certainly be advantageous to her by adding that of novelty to all her other charms, but perhaps you will (8) say she could have spared that one & so indeed she might for she has many that will never change & can never tire. I don't know what James will say when I tell him that your picture gets many a kiss from my beaux, & so do all the others, I have one beau who kisses it every time he calls & sometimes he pays his respects to my mother in the same way--

I am quite charmed with the description of pretty gowns & c. &c. &c. which tell me you have sent us I wish I could see them they should not get mouldy for want of use your allspice necklaces which you mention & all sorts of cheap ornaments of that kind are very desirable to us if sent out when they come in fashion for we are in parties almost every day, we generally

⁵³ Cambric and chambray are woven cottons.

⁵⁴ Hand-painted and dyed bed cover.

meet the same people so that if one has an expensive thing of that kind one gets tired of wearing it often without a change even those ladies who have the finest pearls & diamonds are quite glad of those things for variety I should think when your acquaintance with Indians increases you will frequently be able (9) to send us a small packet in the particular charge of some person, which is better than sending great quantities at once for if it is lost it not so much value & we shall not have long to wait for its being [illegible] the miscarriage of the things you sent by the Skelton Castle I regret much more on your account than ours for I grieve that so much trouble as you must have had should be lost. I hope you will understand the curious drawings I send you they are all sorts & sizes but if they have no other recommendation they are true representations as far as they go I send you all I colour & shall continue to do so for they will entertain you & your friends & I know you will take care of them, Betsy begs you will not give any of them away for slight as they are we may be glad to look at them when the originals are not present. I have not done any of the miniature painting a long time I left it off partly for want of proper materials & partly because it took up so much [---word cut off--- time?] & Sir Henry said it was nonsense [sic] to [---word cut off---] my time drawing a parcel of foolish concieted [sic] girls instead of drawing [---word cut off---] natives & other things of this [---word cut off---country?] which my friends at home [---word cut off---would?] want to see. but when the things [---word cut off---G.S.?] has sent arrive I will have another fit of it. I hope he has sent me some fine (10) small brushes & I want to know if I ought to use more gum in the colour of if any thing should be rubbed on the Ivory as a preparative for its recieving [sic] the colour. This is a genteel way of writing on two sorts of paper but I have no more small, so you must excuse it

You have had wrong information about sending things from Bengall to us for I assure you if any parcels are taken there by mistake or otherwise it will be six months at least before [---word cut off---we?] get them away but it is more often the case that they are lost altogether unless we have notice of thier [sic] being there by letter with the make of the ship & the description of the packages & we can then write to some friend to enquire for them. If packages are not enquired for in a certain time they are sold as Sir Henrys porter has been. I have not patience with you & Mrs Gwillim why don't you cut your shawls, the reason Betsy sends long ones is that the squares are very seldom to be had & when they are they are [word cut off ---uch?) easier in proportion she says the piece that comes out will be so nice it [words cut off] the tooth ache as any little pain [words cut off] has jackets & Jirkins of all sizes now [words cut off] & Sir Henry always wears it next his skin [words cut off] it quite the invalides friend

[Words cut off] shall try to write a few lines to my [word cut off] this opportunity & I have written to Lizzy Pray give my kind love to all friends & give Master jimmy fifty kisses from me tho I am not much pleased with his Postscript I suppose he never expects to see me again (11) in Old England or at least thinks I am to stay here these twenty years he talks of my sending home my brats to him when they are ready for education. I thank him, but I intend to bring them myself if ever I have any, however he shall be accomodated [sic] as I promised in the beginning of this

I hope jimmy has recieved [sic] his new stick by Mr Templer my good friend I long to hear of his safe arrival in England, if you see any thing of him say a thousand kind things from me. I hope he has read my letters. I think it is now high time to conclude this scrawl so God bless you all & preserve your health.

Yours most affectionately,

M. Symonds

[Month and day cut off] 1803 inside of the bag of large brown beads you will find some small ones take from them what you like & send the remainder to Mrs. Pontet I have enclosed a list of the parcels we have sent by Mr Prosser probably many of the trees will be dead

PS I have sent some brown beads for Mrs Pontet & I have written to her about them, so you will be so kind as to send them to her as soon as you recieve [sic] [word cut off] them & I have told her you will show her the drawing &c of the natives & when you pay her bill you can take off the price of the palampores & stuff which I have sent her, The large palampore cost £1-18-0 & the two small ones £2-0-0.

I do not know the price of the snuff [?] yet, but I will send you word of it the next time I write which will be very soon.

(10) This letter has the piece of palompa

By the EIC ship Baring

(11) Mrs James

No 39 Bishopsgate Street
London

Gwillim

**Letter_031_MS_08-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 128r-133v) Mary Symonds to Hester James,
August 19 1803**

(1) My dear Hetty,

Betsy is now writing to you and I have no doubt but she will say all that is necessary, in regard to acknowledging the receipt of the parcels and letters you have been so good as to send us, but as you express so much pleasure in receiving [sic] letters on any subject, I will not let slip this opportunity of sending a few lines, at the same time, I do not think it is a very certain conveyance, as we have at present every reason to think you may be at war with France before the ship can get to St Helena, in which case she will be very likely to be picked up, as she is not able to make much resistance and will sail alone. She is however commanded by a very brave man, whom you may have heard of, as he was much talked of for a very gallant action off the Cape last war; his name is Gordon. (2) We had great hopes that we should have had the satisfaction of acknowledging the arrival of the Union with the parcels from you but she is not yet come in. I received one letter from you by the Wexford, which you had directed to come by the Union. The Wexford arrived here on the 4th of Augst And the Calcutta which sailed from England on the 12 of April arrived here on the 6th she did not bring any letters, but a passenger told us that they saw and spoke the Union off the Cape therefore we are in hourly expectation of her and the Earl Howe; with our new Governor.⁵⁵

I have been vastly Gay ever since the arrival of the packages by the Cumberland, Mr. Livingston (was?) very kind and attentive in getting [sic] them all on shore for us, and I have the Pleasure to say they were all in high preservation, both eatables & wearables. I admire your choice of the gowns very much because they are so neat and useful. The plain muslin frock with lace down the front has

⁵⁵ Lord William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, who was Governor of Madras between 1803 and 1807 and later became the Governor-General of India.

been lent out to half the settlement for a pattern. My shoes fit very well but Betsy's were a litte [sic] too long but she has had them very ingeniously altered her maid told her one day if she pleased she could send for the shoe maker to cut a piece out of the middle. Betsy did not much like the notion (3) of it, but as the girl was very solicitous she told her to give one pair. which he did very well by opening the shoe all round and then cutting a piece out of the upper leather between the vamp & the quarter, and then sewed it together again and cut off the soul [sic] at the toe. she has had them all done so. The gloves you sent are the most beautiful I ever saw both the leather and the making but I am sorry to say they are all spotted except the white ones, but that is always the case with all but Limerrik gloves,⁵⁶ unless you could get any friend to promise to keep the box with them in his cabbin [sic]. for it is owing to the damp of the hold. The flowers Ribbons and indeed every unmade article we think most beautifully chosen and so are the Turbans, but I should have been glad to have found a little of what one may call useful things such as neat straw or chip bonnets such as you and I used to buy in the spring. I really think all the flowers ribbons and every unmade thing is precisely what I should have bought had I been on the spot with all the experience I have had in coming here. The jewelry I will fairly own is not quite the thing except the peppercorns we were very glad of them, as they were quite a general fashion and every body had them (4) but poor Miss Frasers little red beads are quite too pretty for this place. The pearl necklaces were made up too fine, that is there is too much of it & the beads are not so good a sort as some Betsy brought out with her, but the ropes are quite beautiful, I wear mine with a gold chain and the other beads of the necklace I shall use to mix in my hair they are very handsome for that purpose, in future you need not trouble yourself to send many varieties of those things only a neat necklace & earrings once a year for each of us, something pretty good from Grays or any where else, so it is new & not too expensive, perhaps we grow a little nice in the things by getting a number of little things in the country as varieties. I have three sets of cornielion [sic] of different colours and a set of garnets which have been given me. I wish when you send next you would pack a few fans of a fashionable size any comon [sic]? things will do such as you give 1/6 or 2/6⁵⁷ each we have some here but very fine ones which are too dear for common use, or else the common brown paper China fans which are so rotten that you wear one out of a hot day.

(5) I hope to God you will recieve [sic] all the things safe by Mr. Prosser of the United Kingdom, he was so kind as to undertake to carry a great many to you, & he is such a good natured creature that I am sure he will do every thing in his power to convey them safely on home, but all my

⁵⁶ Limerick gloves, so called because they were originally produced in Limerick, Ireland, were a popular style of glove in both Ireland and England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

⁵⁷ 1 shilling 6 pence; 2 shillings 6 pence.

fear is least [sic] it should be war and the ship be taken. Poor Templer! It was surely very hard to be detained after so long an absence from home, and he is such a warm hearted good young man that I I [sic] am sure he must have felt a great deal on his arrival. I suppose he will be gone to sea again before you will recieve [sic] this, however should you see him remember me in the kindest manner to him and tell him, that his friend Ellis has been back again at Madras in the Trident he has been to dine with us once & we took the old walk in the evening to the Bridge and then to the swing, which I had not visited before since he left us, and also tell him that little Sophy Dodson was to have been married yesterday to Cap^{tn} Cramer of the Navy, but she has met with a sad accident, as he was driving her out in a Curricule they met another carriage with troublesome horses which took fright and run up against them, and the pole (6) of the carriage struck against her side and broke two of her ribs and otherwise hurt her so much that she was carried home quite lifeless, she is however likely to recover in a short time, & then the wedding will be celebrated. This you will think is quite enough of people you are not acquainted with.

Mr. Lane whom you mention, as Surgeon of the Earl Howe, is arrived in the Wexford, he was in the Earle Howe last voyage, he is now living with us and is a very steady sencible [sic] young man, he gives the same account of young Barret you do, but he blames him very much for going out to India at all which he says was only occasioned by vanity, as his father offered him a share in his business, which would certainly be a much more respectable situation than any he could hope to obtain here. Mr. Lane has a great deal of pure Herefordshire humour & he entertains us all very much with his droll, he has not the least idea of affectation of finery & I think (7) he would amuse you. I don't know if I shall send any thing to you by him, as he is going to China and therefore [sic] will be a long time before he arrives in England, and I hope to have many opportunities of sending soon as several ships are waiting here for the arrival of the New Governor, I have sent you a Moor womans dress quite complete by Mr. Livingstone. I say quite complete but it wants one garment which I thought was not worth sending as any body may know how to make it, being only a pair of full trousers of red silk, which I do not think you would be tempted to try on if you had it. I have drawn three women very badly but they will serve to shew how the veil is worn. I shall send them by this on the next opportunity. I fear you will not think I have thanked you sufficiently for the trouble you have had in collecting so many pretty things for us but I assure you I feel truly thankful and often fancy myself troting [sic] about with you for them, I think you must have (8) made a fine rummage, wherever you bought the ribbons. I hope Mrs. Shephard has reciev'd a piece of muslin Betsy sent her by Captain Mash & a letter I wrote with it. All the sweet meats you made are remarkably fine I never saw

any so beautiful, and so are Mrs. Whitleys apricots the flavours is just as good as when they were first done I am sure, and not the least fermentation your strawberries and in short all your presents have kept the flavour the same as the first day. I hope you will not mention what I now say as all was well meant [?] but in truth Mrs. Whitleys raspberries have fermented & lost their flavour, for want of sugar, but the apricots make amends for all they are just as my mother used to do them quite clear & firm. Mrs Chambers's damsons came remarkably good, and I must not omit to tell you how acceptable your two bottles of goosberries [sic] were they were quite a treat to me, I have brought out only one bottle yet I made two tarts with it for particular company. I wish you would send Mr Temple, a good scolding he has (9) shaken the table & just now he knocked down the ink pot in return I have sprinkled him a little, but he will not be quiet he is inclined to be lazy & therefore wishes me to be so, and Richard is reading aloud at the same table, some stupid play that Col (Trafford [?]) has written. I tell you this to account for the blunders in my writing. If any change takes place in the tuckers⁵⁸ of morning handkerchiefs I like you to send one or two patterns from [name unclear] or fashionable warehouse but not from the common ones I hav[sic] got some habit shirts [?] from a Lady who came out lately. I must say you are the very best housekeeper I know your pickles are beautiful as well as your preserves indeed all your things are the best for poor Mrs. Chambers has been cheated in her wallnuts they are too old & have hard shelles [sic] inside but yours are in perfection & your cucumbers [sic] are [word crossed out] as green as a ribbon.

Be so good as to tell Tringham, to pack all the sugarplums, in glass, if he puts them in tumblers & corks them or covers them with bladder they will come dry & the tumblers will be very acceptable, but don't put them in decanters (10) because they are of no use here. The damp of a ship is too great to send them in boxes as many of them were all run away and others were stuck together in lumps the almonds were all in one & so were the barley sugarplums however they are just as good to eat tho not so handsome for the table. I think it is not worth while to send capillaire⁵⁹ it is too sweet to be grateful in this hot country. The Raspberry [sic] vinegar is much admired, and a few bottles of Brandy Cherries would be very acceptable as also a few bottles of Noyau⁶⁰ & Cherry brandy the Noyau [?] Betsy brought at Gunter's in Berkeley Square has been very much admired you could order half a dozⁿ bottles some day in your way to

⁵⁸ A "tucker" is a handkerchief "tucked" into the bodice, a kind of fichu.

⁵⁹ Capillaire, a syrup prepared from the maidenhair fern, formerly supposed to have medicinal properties,

⁶⁰ The word 'Noyau' (French for kernel) replaced 'ratafia' in the late 18th century.

Brompton. I have little to say of our own family as thank God, we are all quite well & Sir Henry has borne the last season very well indeed the Land winds have been remarkably mild & we have lately had fine showers every evening which have cooled the air & made every thing appear green & pleasant, I shall not scribble any more at present as it cannot be many days till I shall write again, so God bless you remember me to Jemmy & thank him for his scrap of writing (11) for I am very glad to see his hand tho I had rather see his face. I fear I shall not be able to write to my poor dear mother or Nancy Green but it is much the same when I write to you as writing to all and I hope it will ever be so pray give my kind love to all my friends & believe me.

Ever your most affectionately
Mary Symonds

August 14th, 1809 Richards Clarkes birthday & of course a Gala-

Please tell Templer that we kept the 29 of July in all due form & drank the Grog.

August 19th

I shall keep this open as late as I can in the hope of being able to tell you that the packages are all safe, as the Union came in yesterday & we have just sent on board to enquire for them I am told this ship will sail this evening, & should the packet close before our messenger returns from on board, still it will be some satisfaction to you to know that the ship is come safe

(12) Mrs. James

No 39 Bishopsgate Street within
London

H Gwillim

**Letter_035_MS_09-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 150r-153v), Mary Symonds to her Hester
"Hetty" James, Madras Sept 10th, 1803**

(1) This begins with a

ball Madras Sep^{tr} 10th,

1803 My dear Hetty,

I have already written one sheet of this letter, but by some untoward accident or other I have lost it, and at present I assure you it is a very considerable loss to me tho it contained nothing very material yet it is provoking to lose a letter, and at present I am amazingly busy, with some curious subjects for my pensil [sic]; I have got an old woman to stand, to me, & a Moor man to sit, both of whom are so handsome that I should be very sorry to lose the opportunity of drawing them, I am obliged to take them when I can have them as they sometimes serve me tricks, they promise to come three or four times and sit to me, but after the first or second time, they go away up the country, and I can see no more of them, you must not be offended with me for making a short letter or account of my showing, because whether I write or draw I assure you; the only happiness I have in it is the hope that it will one day serve to amuse you, and all my dear friends at home, Betsy has written you an account of the safe arrival of the long looked for parcels which came by the Union, it is to me wonderful to see how well the things have all kept, one of the Gammons of Bacon was (2) dressed on Monday last for a very large party [words crossed out] (all the gentlemen of the profession to whom the Judges give and annual dinner,) the Bacon was admired beyond any thing at the table and they all said they thought it far preferable to the finest Ham. A few of the jam pots had lost thier [sic] tops and some corks had blew out of the capilaire the sugar plumbs and carraways had suffered as I have already told you the last did, not from keeping but from being packed in paper instead of glass, henceforth you will have them put in tumblers and wound with bladders; I repeat this, as I think it probable you may never receive the letter I have sent by the Wellesly, [word crossed out] she sailed a few days before we had the news of the War⁶¹ and a French privateer has already been seen in the Bay. This is some of the new paper but it writes so greasy that I fear you will not be able to read it, almost all the paper that is brought out to this country either is greasy, or else it blots. I am quite charmed with the collection of Millenary [sic] and dresses you have sent us in

⁶¹ The Napoleonic Wars, which had begun in May 1803.

the packages we last recieved, never was poor gentlewoman so much in want of a straw bonnet as I was before they came, but indeed we (3) three found something of every sort, and all our wants are supplied I am sure it must have been an immense [sic] fatigue to you & poor Nancy Green, to buy them and pack them. I can perceive that these things have been made at some fashionable places & tho they have been kept a year in bondage yet I prefer them to the newest fashions made at any common shop, you see we are a little nice. Our things have arrived at an excellent time, just on the arrival of the new Governor & his Lady, which circumstance has made us all alive here has been visiting the new folks, & taking leave of the old one, Mr. Cockrane⁶² has given two grand balls this week the one to his niece who is just married & the other as a farewell to Lord Clive this last was meant to be most magnificent, he had prepared a great many fireworks & transparencies in compliment to Lord Clive which were to have been seen before supper the supper was in a remarkably fine stile [sic] the tables were all laid in the Garden under an awning erected for the occasion, at about eleven oclock we heard a violent noise outside the house, some people supposed it to be the fireworks beginning to be let off in the Garden. (4) This paper was so bad that I had not patience to write any more upon it.

(5) & ran to the door to look out but in one moment the doors & windows, began to slam too & fro & the thunders rooled [sic] & the lightening flashed with such torrents of rain as you cannot easily imagine [sic] all the fireworks were extinguished, and what was still worse the supper, & the building which contained it were washed away, there was poor Mr. Cockrane at the head of about a hundred black servants, trying to save something from the wreck but they gathered up custards, whiped [sic] sillabubs, Sandwiches, & bunches of flowes [sic], all mixed together at last however it was discover'd that a great deal more supper had been prepared than the tables would hold & with that & the fruit which was not injured, they made one handsome table inside the house which was quite enough for all. These things are part for shew as nobody ever eats a lot Lord Clive staid till four oclock in the morning & they finished the evning [sic], or rather the morning, very gaily, by the way you must tell Mr Templer if you see him that Miss Cockrane is at last so (6) condescending as to give her fair hand to his friends Mr Hoseason.⁶³ I wish to tell Mr. J-- all the news, but I wont [sic] write to him again till I have heard from him, all these things would entertain him because he knows all the people but I fear it is very dull to you who know none of them. I hope all our friends will get safe home who sailed from this in the begining [sic] of the year but it is much to be feared [sic] they will (many of them) be picked

⁶² Basil Cockrane was a wealthy Scottish merchant.

⁶³ Thomas Hosaeason, Secretary to the Commander in Chief.

by the French In the United Kingdom I sent many things for you & letters, & in the Asia, & Dover Castle a great number of letters. The two last we have very little hope of as we have heard they were at St Helena before they could have heard of the war there. The sheet of paper I miss contained little more than an account of our health which thank God is soon given as we are all well, & should I find it, I hope it will do equally well for the next time. Betsy has written very fully to almost every body by this opportunity therefore [sic] I shall only add my kind love to Nancy, & James & the Thoburns, & c & C with proper remembrances to all my dear friends, & a sincere wish for the arrival of that hour which will restore me thier [sic] society, & then I hope never to part from (them?) again for any consideration, as I am convinced that no consideration can ever make amends for their loss, the meanest cottage with (7) you all will ever be far preferable to me, to a palace without you. May God bless you & keep you, for many happy days, with your most affectionate sister,

Mary Symonds

We shall send nothing but letter this time as Lord Clive is determined to sail without waiting for convoy so we don't think it very safe & there are some Palampores in his ship already for you & Mrs. Toussaint & the snuff which I could not tell you the price of before it is 6 Bottles at 4 shillings each I cannot send bills of these things because we buy them of natives who cannot write any English several ships have been captured by the Fleet here, under Admiral Rainier, Cap^{tn} Johnson of the Victor has taken a very likeable [?] prize which will make him & his crew very rich, it was a present going from the King of Cochin China to Boonaparty [sic]⁶⁴ & we saw one prize brought in yesterday Dutch I believe

(8) Pleas to send this back to me

By the H. C's ship Walpole

Mrs. James

no. 39 Bishopgate Street

Within

⁶⁴ From the Emperor Gia Long of Vietnam to Napoleon Bonaparte.

London

HGwillim

Letter_037_MS_10-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 160r-162v) Mary Symonds to Esther Symonds, n.d.

(1) My Dear Mother

I address this to you least you should imagine [sic] I am neglectful of you, although I consider my letters as to the whole family when I write to Hetty, I shall tell you in the first place (because I think it the most important part of a letter) that we are all perfectly and I think Betsy gets strength and flesh and her present employments keep her quite happy I almost wish you could see her in her glory; that is, with about twenty black men round her, a table full of books, the floor strewn with baskets of seeded branches of trees, and she herself standing in the midst with her cap snatched to one side and talking away till she is quite fatigued. The seeds and plants are collected from the Hills, and woods, by some poor country people, and she gets some of the native Doctors to give her the common name, the Brahmins tell her the Sanscrit [sic] and the Books are consulted to find out the Linaean [sic] names so that with collecting plants &c raising them in our own garden, studying the Language & manners of this county [sic], & now & then drawing we continue thank God to amuse ourselves, and fill up all our time, without being indebted to (2) to the society of the place, which is stupid enough in all conscience [sic] I have written to Hetty by every opportunity, but I fear some of our letters will go to the Isle of France, as the ships sailed just before we heard of the war, and they had no Convoy. It will be a very long time between [sic] the last letters we recieved from England & the next we shall have as you all neglected to write by the last ships of the season, which I assure you was a great disappointment to us, and just now the monsoon is setting [sic] in so that no more can arrive here till Jan^{ry}, or perhaps Feb^{ry}. You will I suppose see a great deal in your newspapers about the war in India, most likely you will know much more about than we do, as every thing is kept extremely secret by these Governments, and I thank God the seat of war is very far from us; a very great victory has lately been obtained over the enemy which it is thought must soon put an

end to this war, but it has been obtained at a terrible expence, one English Regiment [sic] has been quite cut to peices [sic].⁶⁵ I knew many of the Officers who are killed, & wounded, some of them were our shipmates, and Colonel Maxwell of the 19th Dragoons, who is killed, came out with his wife, in the same fleet with us, we have always visited them & he was at Colle [letters obscured] with Sir Tho^s Strange & Sir Henry, and he was a very sensible, pleasant man; his wife is now at Madras (3)

It is reported that the Marattas left 23 thousand on the field, our loss is supposed to be 15 hundred⁶⁶ By the last fleet Sir Henry received a letter from Mrs. Busington [?] of Winsley, which she sent by her son who came out a cadet. I am much surprised that such dashing folks should think of sending a son in such a situation, as it can only enable him to live with economy, for many years, and taking the inconvenience the Army is exposed to in this country and the unhealthyness [sic] of the cli[mate] in some parts, together with sending a child so you[ng] friendless, into a foreign country I think it would be better to provide him in any way at home, then to send him out in that situation. I am sure if the Parents could see as we do the danger of thier [sic] situation they would sooner make Tinkers of them; but I suppose their vanity is chiefly concerned, as they are unable to put them in high situations and unwilling to see them in low ones, certainly they do not consult their childrens happiness Poor Mrs Hathway has lost three sons here, and tho one of them is said to have had some property when he died, yet he had so far forgot the necessities of home, that he left it all to a black woman whom he kept.

You mention in one of your letters that Ned and Nancy are obliged to leave Tupsley, and we are very anxious to know if they have got another Place to thier [sic] account and where it is. I hope they will get an advantageous situation I suppose thier [sic] family & Hettys has increased by this time, from the comments we had (4) they have our dayly [sic] prayers for both thier [sic] safety [word cut off] hope you will send us a particular account of the grain and other productions of the country and the price of all sorts of provision as it is a great pleasure to us to know the truth on those subjects, and besides you cannot concieve [sic] how anxious the families who are returning to England with moderate fortunes, are to know those matters, for they have such ridiculous ideas of the expence of England that you would laugh to hear them talk upon the subject, most of the people here know no more of England than if they had never seen it, and

⁶⁵ Possibly in reference to the Battle of Assaye, 23 September 1803, part of the Anglo-Maratha wars.

⁶⁶ William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) p. 372 puts the casualties at Assaye at 1,584 for the EIC's army and 6,000 for the Marathas.

some of them who have been there for a year or two, and returned can talk of nothing else, but the wonders they saw and the desire they have to return to it again, but for want of knowing what they ought to do, and to pay, they are imposed upon far beyond imagination [sic]. I shall endeavour to write a few lines to Hetty by this opportunity but as we have very short notice of the ships sailing I cannot [words obscured] very long letters Betsy is also writing a letter or two tho we are told by all the knowing ones that it is ten to one if ever the ship arrives in England we send letters by all and therefore [sic] it will be hard indeed if some do not escape. I suppose you and your boy are enjoying a good fire, now whilst we are boiling in our [word cut off], but however I hope the time will come (5) [sentence cut off] together with a good Elder Bishop. For many days the last hot season the thermometer was at an hundred and three in the sitting [sic] rooms and at the same time it was 130 in a Tent, this you wi[sic] own was warm work for at the same time if you let in the wind it scorched you like a flame and if you shut it out you were suffocated, but yet it is very extraordinary that the hot season is thought particularly healthy both by the natives and the Europeans, and what I think wonderful is that through all that heat, tho not a drop of rain falls, yet the trees continue beautifully green, and many tender looking plants throw out new shoots without a drop of water. I think you will rub up your spectacles, and scold at me and my my pens [?], but you know bad writing is a family failing, however as you have got some young eyes about you I shall make no appologies [sic] but if you put my nephew Tom to spell it out I hope the trouble he will have in doing it will serve as a lesson to him to attend to his writing that he may make all his aunts ashamed of themselves by scribing beau[tiful] letters to them which will be no trouble to read, and I will answer for their [word missing] happy to recieve [sic] them. We are vastly glad to see (6) such progress made in the [words missing] & Harry, I really think you will have two great artists but joking apart, it is really curious to see how well they have drawn the figures, pray continue to send us specimens of thier [sic] performance, as I shall preserve these to compare and by that means we shall be able to judge of thier [sic] progress, I want to know who little Ned grows most like & if Charles continues as handsome as he was. I wrote to Mr John Gwillim last March by the Dover Castle and as we have heard that she was safe within 3 weeks sail of England I hope she escaped the French Fleet, there was a Lady and two children of my particular acquaintance on board, the Lady was never in Europe before her name is Compton & she is the wife of one of the Lawyers here her youngest child is a Goddaughter of Betsy's. The Husband has sent her home to be polished such a wretched a dawdle as she is you never beheld. I believe her Father or Grandfather was a Frenchman & therefore [sic] they call her a french woman but the fact is she neither writes or [word cut off] any Language fit to be seen her English is the [word missing] that, one can

scarcely understand much [word missing] her, I dare say you will never meet with her, [word missing] God Bless you all and pray give my kind love to all my dear friends & believe me

[word missing] affectionately yours M. [word missing]

Letter_038_MS_10-1803 (Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 163r-166v) Mary Symonds to Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, October 20, 1803

(1) October 20th, 1803

My Dear Hetty,

I have scribbled a few lines to my mother just to satisfy her that we are all alive and well & for your satisfaction I intend doing the same as it is reported that the Union will sail in a day or two at farthest the packet is to close to night she sails without any convoy or companion and therefore [sic] stands an excellent chance of being taken, but as all the ships that have sailed from this for the last year, have run a great risk, I think it necessary to write by all, We have told you over and over again of the safe arrival(s?) of the good old Packages in the Union, and how smart they have (made?) us I hear that the Cap^{tn} of the Skelton Castle (who first took those on board is dead on his passage, if so he has paid his debt & his sins must be forgiven, we also hear that Cap^{tn} Mash is dead, is it true ? I hope our [word missing] Mr Prosser is arrived safe with all his Packages [word missing] we sent by him all we could [word missing] (2) [cut off] sorts Mrs. Toussaint will [word missing] by [word missing] [Castle] Eden, her snuff & Palampores and also one for [?] you, the price of the Palampores I told you in a former letter the snuf [sic] cost 4 shillings each [word missing] When we have heard something [sic] of the state of Europe, & can send with tolerable certainty you shall have some more drawings &c, as I am always going on, slowly in the old track [?] This is the first monsoon day we have had, it now blows hard from the Northward and rains torrents, we are all praying for a heavy monsoon as the late dry season has occasioned a scarcity of rice in some parts; which is a dreadful thing in this country as the natives depend entirely upon it for thier [sic] subsistence, in Bengall they seem to entertain some apprehension as Lord Wellesly⁶⁷ has issued an order that no grain of any description shall be exported from there. I suppose that will come a little hard upon us for we recieve [sic] the greatest part of our (wheat?) from thence. There has been a great Gala lately given by a native a pretty rich one you may imagine [sic] when I tell you he determined to spend 12 thousand

⁶⁷ Richard, Marquess Wellesley, Governor-General of India 1798-1805.

pounds in Entertainments on this occasion, it was his Eldest sons wedding two of his daughters and 3 or 4 other relatives [words missing] married at the same time, altogether [six] brides, & six bridegrooms, he invited all the [word missing] in turn; when he asked us Sir Henry told him he did not like to meet a great (3) [sentence missing] a dinner for about twenty [words missing] requested us to bring our own party, as we [word missing] a very few I had a better opportunity of observing all the decorations; & when I came home I made some memorandums, since which I have been trying to make a model of the whole, in pasteboard; when it is complete I shall send it you with a description of the whole, it will just go into a bandbox & I shall request some person put in a cabbin [sic], & if the people at the India house take it We shall have no great loss & they will have no great gain. It will now be at least 3 months before we shall be able to write to you again as no ship can be in the roads during the monsoon; therfore [sic] do not alarm yourself or blame us, as you did last year; for the same delay always happins [sic] at the same season. All your Jams & jellies keep amazingly well & Sir Henry is very fond of a lick [?] particularly the strawberry [word missing] make excellent custard pudding [word missing] you add a little jam as a great improvement to them, we have had custard pudding at least 4 times a week ever since we came into this country, I own I am a little tired [?] of them, & therfore somtimes [sic] order another not [?] by way of [?] society, but as soon as it comes on the table he says, sure tis very hard I never can have that [?] pudding I am so fond of the other day I said I feared the (damp?) of the weather would spoil some of the sweetmeats, good god, says he why (4) [sentences missing] though, I sent any letter to my (mother?) yesterday by the Union but I had not time finish this bef[ore] the packet closed, however I am more fortunate than I expected for Mr. Rackets who is part owner of the Matilda is just come to tell me she will sail this evening, with french prisoners, that is the prisoners are sent away at our expence there will be no great dangers of her being taken, & she is a good sailer & will probably be in England several months before the Union, Betsy is making up a parcell [sic] of seeds for Master Regi, which I believe she will send to Mr. Butterworths⁶⁸ with some books Sir Henry intends returning to him, being imperfect. I do not know if Richard Clarke or Mr Temple will hear of this opportunity of writing as they are both in the Fort & we have only two hours notice therfore [sic] you can tell thier [sic] friends that they are in good health & as gay as larks.

Mr Gwillim sent to me last night after he had gone to bed to (put?) one in (mind?) of the Hereford [word obscured] who he said were going about in thier sattins [?] with the little [word

⁶⁸ Wieldon and Butterworth, printers of legal works.

obscured] to taste [word missing] & he says nothing can be heard in the town today but six pences three pences & nine pences, I wish I was within hearing of them, I wrote to Mr.

Wilby some weeks ago & so did Sir Henry, Mr. W-- sent a letter to a Mr. Wales as an introduction but poor young man he was so ill all the time the [word missing] that he could not come on shore and a few days ago I heard that he died soon after his arrival [word missing] in Bengall. I know the Captain [of the] (5) ship he was in, & he spoke very highly of him he was the son of the Mr. Wales who went round the World with Sir Joseph Banks, & was afterwards appointed a Master at Christs Hospital, I believe Mr Wilbys brother has the situation now. If you mention the young mans death to Mr Wilby I think it possible it may be the first news he will hear of it, but I do not know any particulars as the ship is not yet returned from Bengall, [word cut off], it was the Lushington, in which also Mr. Waite and Mr. Longdill came out from little Longdill [word cut off] disappointed in India, he came here before [word cut off] January and found the weather defightful [sic], [word cut off] this time he arrived in the midst of the [words cut off] and he has been frightened out of his wits [words cut off] the climate ever since he has been here, [word cut off] which the government send (him?) about [letters obscured] to place, without giving him proper notice to [word cut off] which hurts his dignity mightily; he is a lively little creature, but I think him rather pert and forward, he is just now gone to [word cut off] to attend some troops who arrived here from Bengall. They are a supply [words obscured] to assist our people, to revenge the horrid cruelty exercised on our poor countrymen, which you with no doubt see on account of before this reaches you, that has hitherto been a most unfortunate war, the war with the Marattas at present (6) seems [?] a more promising appearance but the slaughter on both sides in the late victory obtained by Gen,l Wellesly, has been dreadful to think of. I knew many of the officers who fell, but thank God the seat of war is so far from us that we know less of it than you do, only we have our information a little sooner, but it is the policy of these governments to keep all thier [sic] measures extremely seecret [sic] and I fear many of them would not bear the eye of open day. [word cut off] have at present a new, & a very young Governor,⁶⁹ of whom as yet we can know nothing [words cut off] last⁷⁰ who left us in the Castle Eden; is [letters obscured] [words cut off] regreted [sic] he led a sad sensual life, even [words cut off] his wife was with him he entertained [word cut off] dirty black women in his service & after [word cut off] left him he had always five or six who were sometimes sweeping the house and at other times were admited [sic] to the embrace of his Lordship & his whole time was occupied

⁶⁹ William Bentinck.

⁷⁰ Edward Clive.

[sic] in his attention to these amiables, in feeding Calves in raising vegetables, and in devouring [word cut off], the last being perhaps the greatest [sic] delight of all, as it is certain it occupied the largest portion of his time, the public affairs which he ought to have attended to were put into the hands of men, some of whom were too weak to understand them & they again (7) were supposed [word cut off] be the creature of [word cut off] have I fear, no claim to blessing of a quiet [words cut off] this on the same ground where the Father obtained eternal fame,⁷¹ the son has I think(s?) brought on the same name, eternal disgrace. It is a long time since I wrote to Mrs. Shephard I suppose you see her as often as usual & I hope she is well I fear I shall not be able to write to her this time & therefore [sic] request you will give our kindest regard to her, & pray tell her I have enquired for the Major Remington [word cut off] mentioned and find he belongs to the [word cut off] establishment & therefore [sic] it is most [words cut off] we shall not see him in India. I hope [word cut off] has got his stick by Bonnelly [?] & the shawl by Mr. [word cut off] if he has with the addition of leather geb [word cut off] & a dashin new hat, I think he will be eied [sic] in Hyde Park-- be sure give my love to him, & to Poor dear Nancy Green, & be sure to thank her over & over for all the trouble she has had on our account which I am sure must have been a great deal, indeed you must all have had a vast deal of trouble in packing & purchasing Pray remember me very affectionately to the two Thoburns & all that family, & indeed to every kind friend I have left; and rely on it, when I find myself on English ground again, I will butter my feet, as we used to do the cats to prevent thier [sic] leaving the house God bless you, believe me most truly and affectionately yours.

Mary Symonds.

October 21, 1803

(8) you will have good fortune if you read what is already scrawled on this miserable sheet of paper you see how it all spoils on (carriage?) Betsy begs if you have not already sent her the [word cut off] of all the milenary [sic] that you will without loss of time send her the exact price of the worked (mustin[sic]?) cloake with braid [letters obscured], it was packed in Mrs Toussaints box Betsy wants [words cut off], as she has sold it to lady (tho/the?) one [words cut off] out with her being very little the [letters obscured] [words cut off] lady was very desirous to have the new one [words cut off] which Betsy[?] will [?] having a good black [words cut off] by way of variety

⁷¹ In reference to Robert Clive.

Received July 25 1804 Clapham

***PDF page numbers indicated in bolded parentheses

Letter_040_MS_02-1804 (Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 179r-183v) Mary Symonds to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James Madras February 28, 1804

(1)1804

(2) Madras February 28th, 1804

My Dear Hetty,

Having this day enjoyed the great satisfaction of recieving [sic] two pretty little letters from my dear mother, & you, I sit down to answer them by the return of the Post, you will more easily imagine [sic], than I can describe to you, the pleasure these two letters have given us, when I tell you; that the last letter we have recieved [sic], before these, were dated April 1803; that a ship has arrived here called the Euphrates which left England the 29th of Sep^{tr} without bringing us a single line from any one friend, and that the Admiral Aplin in which these letters came has been taken by the French, but by an unusual act of kindness the private letters were given up to Captain Rogers, who arrived in Bengall about a fortnight ago, from whence he forwarded them to Madras, I would haven [sic] given the best of my possessions for three lines from you by that ship which sailed from England in the end of September, but we must hope for the best & be thankfull [sic] to providence for so unexpectedly preserving these, my mothers letter is indeed a real comfort to us, for it is truly wonderful to think of her being able to bear (3) the immence [sic] fatigue of such a journey as she describes hers to have been & yet to have such good heath [sic] and spirits after it.

We have over & over again acknowledged the receipt of all the packages you were so good as to send us, by the Union, by Mr. Livingstone Mr. Longdill & Mr. Toussaint, & if you

have been so lucky as to recieve [sic] all our letters [word obscured and crossed out] I ~~hope~~ think you cannot have been long at any one time without hearing of us, for I made it a note [?] ever since the war began, to write a few lines by every ship that has left this place The collection of things you sent us has been a constant source of amusement to us, besides the satisfaction we have in wearing, eating &c &c we are every now & then surprised with some new discovery somtimes [sic] in unrolling a piece of ribbon when we get off half the quantity out pops a beauty of another sort which we never expected to see, and the other day only, I discovered a packet of mottoes⁷² amongst the confectionary, to be sure they were a little mouldy from having lain so long under some fruit lozenges which were damp but I set one of the little black boys, to rub them clean with 1 piece of flannel & now they look (4) quite fresh again. I am sure you would laugh enough, if you could but have a peek at us sometimes, trying on the things; for you have no idea how stupid we are grown already about putting them on, one of the caps with a yellow liburnum [sic] flower in it was tryed [sic] with the hind side foremost & indeed every side but the right, or even [?] that perhaps by chance but we could make nothing of it fit to be seen, although it looked beautiful off the head, so it was given up untill [sic] a lady happened to come from Europe with one the same which we saw her wear, & ever since, that cap has been a great favorite of Betsys; then there is a pretty cloake which was like to be lost for it was packed inside one of Sir Henrys hats & he of course chose to have the pleasure of unpacking them himself, which he did in a little side room & threw out all the contents of the box except the hats, supposing it to be only waste paper as it was very light the wind blew it under a couch in one corner of the room were [sic] it lay till the next day undiscovered, when the woman who swept the room brought it to light & we began to try it on, that is Betsy took it into her own room to try; she & her maid worked at it for some time, but not being (5) able to settle it she came into my room to know if I could find out the manner of wearing it, for says she 'I am sure it must be very pretty if we could but tell how to put it on. So I patted it down on the back & I put the strings under the arms, & then over the arms & then tied them round the neck & round the waist, but all would not do the cape stood out behind like a Shift & the lace would not quite reach to the elbows, which gave it a very odd look, so at last she took it off in despair & I began to turn it about on the bed & to lament over it when all of a sudden it came into my head to put it on another way, & then to our great surprise we found that we had been all the time putting it on the wrong side uppermost & that the thing we took for the cape was intended to be the peli[sse?] of a jacket & very pretty it is, & Betsy wears it often with the Bonnet made of the same muslin,

⁷² Women would wear mottoes of various sorts on their caps, often as political statements.

which she calls her calash,⁷³ & she is quite happy in it because it hides the sides of her face which you know she always liked being so much afraid of looking bold (6)

I have trotted about nicely in your thick pair of green shoes not on the sea beach, because there the sand is very fine, & ones feet do not want any protection, besides I thought the sea waters would spoil the shape of them at once, so, I always go there in old shoes made in this country as they are of no value, but the thick ones I brought with me here to the mount where we are in the same house we had last year at this season, from this place we frequently scramble about the hills, which are very rocky & every where covered with brambles, & a variety of thorny plants which run close to the ground Betsy has been highly pleased with two pair of green shoes which you sent her, & she thinks they were not bought at the same place with the others as they (she wishes for some more the same) had no makers name in them, & they fit her better than any of the rest, indeed both hers & mine are in general a little too long. We were very much amused by your Idea of the cotton in which the pearls were packed, I assure it is not the wool you suppose it to be, tho' I think it a pity to undecieve you yet I must tell you it is nothing more than a bit of Bourbon cotton the same as that which maks [sic] the shining French cotton used for working the beautiful satin stitch so much the fashion at present, we have sent Mr. Whitley a good deal of the seed of it at different times (7) I do not intend to go scribbling on in one letter to make it of an immence [sic] length, because having nothing very material to say to you except that we are all well & comfortable, I think it will be much better in the present state of affairs to put a short letter into each ship four or five are expected to sail from this place in a short time but the day is not yet fixed, & I intend to go on writing every day a little to somebody or other till the last.

Poor Sir Henry is very angry at the late peace, which is not to be wondered at considering how much this country feels the ill effect of it,⁷⁴ it just served to give the French an opportunity of sending out a fleet which has been anoying [sic] our trade ever since and they have contrived to destroy one of the Companies Warehouses. Our troops have completely succeeded in driving all the French out of the Maratta⁷⁵ Army which is a great thing for us as they are a mischievous [sic] decietful [sic] set. An officer of thiers [sic] has lately been discovered corresponding with his countrymen at the Isle of France he has lived in the English pay for ten or twelve years affecting to be a true friend to them, but has been employing himself to (8) find out the weakest

⁷³ Or calèche, a woman's silk hood.

⁷⁴ The Peace of Amiens, which lasted until from March 1802 until May 1803.

⁷⁵ Maratha.

parts of the country & lately whilst one of the Bastions of the fort was under repair & we were engaged with the Marratta's he wrote a letter to the French Admiral telling him the exact state of Fort St George & advising him to bring his whole force then to a particular part where he would find very little to oppose him. This correspondence he sent from a Dannish [sic] port & luckily it was intercepted by one of our Frigates, what will be done with the French man I do not know. As you do not mention Mr. Clarkes family in your last letter, I conclude they were in Scotland enjoying a fine cool breze [sic] I think a winter at St Andrews must blow away the cobwebs unless they stick close indeed, however it will make the children very hardy & Charles will be able to make his way in the world all the better for a Scotch accent, it is a great recommendation wherever a Scotsman is in power & that I believe will be found all over Great Britain & in all countries dependant [sic] upon her.

We are all very glad to hear that Ned has got a farm & that it is in the neighbourhood of his brothers I hope your next letters will give us some more particulars of the situation & I want to know if it is large or small & what is the principal produce of it I like much to hear some country news & the price of provisions &c (9) Poor Nancy Green was sadly used about her gown it was some months before we discovered the mistake of it's [sic] not being sent & when we found the peice [sic] of muslin lying here we were going to give it back to the man it was bought of, only it happened to have a mark upon it which when we saw convinced us of our error, as that is now otherwise disposed of Betsy intends to send her something [sic] else it will be a shawl if we can get any body to carry it & if we do I hope it will have the good luck to escape the nasty privateers which infest these seas in an inconcievable [sic] manner. Great fears are entertained here for the homeward bound China ships, & if they are lost you will lose some trifles which we gave to the care of Mr Lane & Mr. Livingston, but you will know the event soon after the reciept [sic] of this. I long to know if you have seen Mr. Prosser & his ship got off safe, if he had a good voyage he ought to have arrived whilst my mother was with you. I shall say no more in this but our joint love to every dear friend & a kiss or two poor jimmy, O why would he have a red coat. I am quite shocked to hear of his accident but indeed he must be so valourous. I am my dear Hetty ever affectionately yours

M Symonds

Feb.^{ry} 29, 1804 leap year, now or never⁷⁶

(11) I have put up a pair of Carnelian sleeve buttons for Mr. Wilby & a Trichinopoly stone for a seal, will you be soo [sic] good as to send them to him I will also send his wife a pair of Argus Pheasant feathers if any one will carry them for me they are valuable & bear a high duty therfor [sic] it is difficult to get any one to take them

(12) Received Oct^r 17th

By the H.C's ship Windham

Mr^s. James

No 39 Bishopgate Street within

London

HGwillim

Letter_042_MS_07-1804

Dropbox File Name: MSS_C240_3_027.jpg

[From Mary Symonds to her Sister, Hester "Hetty" Symonds James, July 21, 1804]

(1) Madras July the 21, 1804

My dear Hetty,

⁷⁶ There is a tradition on Leap Day allowing women to initiate dances and propose marriage. If the proposal was refused the man was expected to buy the woman a silk gown or, by the mid-20th century, a fur coat. The tradition is supposed to originate from a deal that Saint Bridget struck with Saint Patrick.,

The Tigress having unexpectedly put in here to day, I have the pleasure of writing a few lines by her, She was hastily dispatched by Lord Wellesly to England direct but fearing her water would run short she has put in, only for a few hours, to take in some more, it is now three o'clock and the packet is to close at six, this I mention in order to prevent any other friends being offended, by our not answering their kind letters, We had yesterday the pleasure of receiving some packets from you, by the Marquis Wellesly (I believe), which ship arrived here the night before last, in company with, The Lady Jane Dundas, Lord Nelson, & Princess Charlotte, the Marchioness of Exeter left England with them, but was separated by a Storm off the Cape so she is (2) not yet arrived nor do they know any thing of her but, I hope she will find her way here in time, particularly as we expect to receive several letters &c from our dear friends We have been cruelly disappointed of letters from home since the war, one ship was lost off Madeira, in which you say you had sent letters, the Aplin too was taken and her publick packet thrown over board, we however recive [sic] one letter by her from you, one from my dear Mother & one from Mrs. Shephard, yours I suppose was sent by a private hand, it was forwarded to us from Calcutta but we never heard by whom that letter was dated August the middle and this we have now got, is dated March, A long time to be without a single line from any friend We have now recived [sic] only one letter from you of a single sheet, one from Lizzy Thoburn, to me & two from Mary -- to me and -- to Betsy Sir Henry has one from Dr. Cam, and a ridiculous little shabby note from James, for which he may expect a good trimming [sic] when I have more (3) time to write; His letter to come 15000 miles consists of 6 lines of business, and two more of apologies for not making it shorter!!! You mention a Mr. Biss and so does Lizzy but we don't know who or what he is yet, his name is not in the list of passengers, therefore [sic] I suppose he is an officer of the ship and is not come on shore, I have sent to enquire after him but fear I shall not get any answer before I close this, Poor Richard Clarke has a most melancholy letter from his mother with a particular account of the dear little Mary Ann's death, surely it was one of the heaviest calamities, which providenc[e] can bestow, to lose so sweet a creature in such a sudden and dreadful way, Betsy is so much shocked and fretted by the account of it that she cannot write to day, owing to a sad headache she has got by crying and grieving and poor Richard is as low as death; in other respects, thank God we are all pretty well. The worst of the Land wind season is now (4) over and Sir Henry has weathered it pretty well tho not without suffering much from the effects of the heat on his weak nerves he cannot sleep or eat well in the hot weather, so that it weakens him a good deal and brings down the flesh which he picks up the cool season, I am very sorry to be prevented from giving you more satisfactory accounts of your dispatches by the ships of this season but it is better to say something [sic] than nothing four ships which left England

before these have not yet arrived but we are in hourly expectation of them, and I believe there is no fear entertained for thier [sic] safety tho they are so long coming Admiral Rainiers has been on shore at Madras some weeks and all the fleet have lately been here to Bristol the Admiral was expected to stay some time longer, but he went on board yesterday morning and sailed before sunrise, quite secretly (5) his first Lieu^t wrote a note to richard to say they were going but he did not know where or why so suddenly, it is reported here that he had some information of Admiral Linois having got out from the Mauritius and went in pursuit of him, if so I hope he will come up with the French fleet & that we shall have a good account of them.

We are much grived [sic] to hear that my poor mother has spent so bad a winter, I fear she is not so comfortable in her living since Nancy left Tupsley, for Ned used to see her often and take care of her, and the little Journeys to & fro were good exercise without being too much for her, beg her for Gods sake to keep herself comfortably & spare nothing that will add to her happiness the little she requires is not worth saving I am sure, her boys are with her still I suppose, but it is a long time, since we (6) have had any account of them. You say your pretty little girl was six months old, this is the first time we have heard of her existance [sic] & she is now (I trust) 10 months old pray let us hear of her as often as you can We are much puzzled [sic] to find how she came by her blue eyes, my mother always accounted for my pug nose by her looking at Fanny Wilis, pray who have you been Ogling? I might have suspected my friend Templer, but you have not had enough of his company to make any impression or else I think he has a pair of blue eyes as well worth looking at as any I know, I have received two very kind letters from him, and I find by them that I have lost one of his valuable epistles those I have are very melancholy he complains sadly of having so short a time to stay with his family after his long absence he says the kindness and affection of his brother (7) & sisters instead of making him happy were an affliction to him because he knew he could not stay to enjoy their society, he is an excellent young man & has a most feeling heart.

I trust you will not be long at any one time without hearing from us as we shall have frequent opportunities of writing between this and October & we will make a point of missing none of them. I shall very soon send answers to Lizzy and Mary, but in the mean time I beg you will remember me kindly to them and thank them for thier [sic] letters & the strawberry seed which I shall sow as soon as we have some rain to cool the earth.

Sir Henry was obliged to attend the court to day & therfore [sic] has not time to write, but he desires me to say he is much surprised that James has not acknowleged [sic] the reciept [sic] of the money he sent home by the Wellesly, Cap^{tn} Gordon, it was 200 &, he begs and intreats [sic] that Jimmy will not be so very concise in his letters, do find some way of punishing him for it, lock up his stick on sunday, & don't let him have the news papers for a month. I find I must conclude as it is near 5 oclock, so God bless you and be sure to give my kinest [sic] love to good Nancy Green (8) I am rejoiced to hear so good an accounts of her health from the Thoburns, with love to Ned Nancy and all my dear friends beleive [sic] me ever affectionately yours

M Symonds; Still

Madras July the 21:st 1804

By the Tigress

Mrs James

39 Bishopsgate Street within

London

Letter_044_MS_08-1804 (Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 193r-196v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, August 12 1804

(1) Aug^t the

12th, 1804 My dear

Hetty

I wrote to you by the Tigress which ship left this place about a fortnight ago. I had then the pleasure to tell you we were all well, and that we had received some of your kind & truly

welcome letters by the Fleet. Since that time we have received the remainder of them, together with the packages you mention. The milinery [sic], five irons, and the Pickles, Ketchup & Raspberry vinegar, are all in excellent order: but the preserves, I am sorry to say have suffered much: Mr. Biss tells me the ship was constantly rooling [sic] and full of water, which was the cause of the sweetmeats fermenting many of the pots were broke and others had lost thier [sic] tops: but those which were put in stone jars and corked down came safe. The milinery [sic] (as you observe) is a small quantity but as we had such an ample supply last year it is quite enough & it is remarkably pretty & very well packed, so that it all looked as fresh when we opened it as if it had been that minute made, we are indeed very much obliged to you for the great trouble you take on our account, and we are much indebted to all those dear friends who remember us so kindly & make such great exertions (2) for us, god grant we may all live to meet again, & that we may have the power to make you some return.

~~for~~ That this life is all uncertainty and that we ought not to promise ourselves any thing beyond the present hour, we have sufficient proof but yet there are few if any amongst us, who consider this sufficiently to keep thier [sic] minds prepared to meet misfortunes calmly, when it may please the Almighty to visit them with the afflictions which are common to all men, we have very sensibly felt the weakness of our nature in this respect within these few days: poor Temple⁷⁷ had an illness so short and apparently so slight that it did not prepare us for the sad event which has taken place and consequently it has been a severe shock to us all, he dined with us on wednesday and Thursday, the 1st & 2nd of the month, & on Friday he dined with Mr. Disney a gentleman in the law: he was quite well & in remarkably good spirits, all the evenings at night when he was going home the weather was cloudy [sic] & threatened rain, therfore [sic] Mr. & Mrs. Disney endeavoured to prevail with him to sleep at thier [sic] house but they could not it however rained very little that night & we do not know that he was wet at all, the next day about 12 oclock he complained of a little sickness at his stomach which Sir Henry mentioned to us at dinner time, but the sickness went off & Temple said he was very well again, however the next morning being Sunday Richard drove into the Fort to Church & he called upon T- to ask if he would come out (3) to dine with us, but he found him very unwell & with a good deal of fever, he had a Dr. Scarman with him who lived next door to him, he said the disorder was of no great consequence & that Mr. T- would be well in a day or two on Monday Richard & Sir Henry went to the Fort to thier [sic] business & both went to see Temple but at separate times when Sir Henry called he had fallen asleep & therfore [sic] he would not let him be disturbed, but when

⁷⁷ Temple was Deputy Registrar to the Supreme Court of Madras.

Richard called he found him sitting up apparently well & the fever had quite left him, he said he should come to St Thome, perhaps the next day, this they told us when they came home & we all naturally concluded that the disorder was at an end, but the next morning, tuesday Richard went to business early; it being his court day he set off from home at 8 oclock & when he got about 2 hundred yards he met one of Temples men runing [sic] who desired him to make haste as his master was very ill Richard drove very fast, but when he came to the Fort gate (a distance of only two miles from the place where he met the servant) he saw a man runing [sic] with a note towards him, which was from Dr. Scarman, saying that poor Temple was no more he was taken ill at 8 oclock the night before & Scarman staid [sic] with him some time, but he did not apprehend the least danger, nor think the illness by any means of a serious nature, he left him quite tranquil at night & at six in the morning he called on him again, and still saw nothing serious, but he applied a blister [word crossed out] (4) because Temple complained of a tightness on his chest Mr. Scarman then went out to prepare some medicine and Temple told his servant to pat his back as he felt a fulness which he thought was wind, the man did so, & T- then said 'that will do' and laid down as to sleep, the servant sat down by him, & in a few minutes Temple called out "go and bring Mr. Scarman back I don't feel well," the man ran & returned with Mr. Scarman instantly, only from the next room, but they came too late, for his breath had passed away in that moment. Mr Scarman called in three Surgeons besides himself to assist at opening the body, as he wished for some witnesses least his credit should suffer, they found that his death was occasioned by suffocation from a quantity of blood & water which had gathred [sic] in the chest, and which it is supposed was the reason of his always expressing a disinclination to take exercise, his disorder is said to be extremely uncommon in this climate, so much so that Dr. Scarman thinks his assertion would have been doubted, had he not taken the precaution to call in three of the most respectable Surgeons here to bear testimony. What consolation you will have it in your power to offer to his (5) afflicted father I know not for what can we say in such a case, that has not been said a thousand times before & without effect. He who has lost his only child, whom he looked upon as the sure prop to sustain his sinking age, who reasonably hoped to receive the reward of of [sic] a laborious life in the credit & comfort he would derive from such a son, will sink under the loss of his darling treasure, and if it pleases god to preserve his life through such a trial, will most certainly for the remainder of his days, feel himself a miserable solitary being; for though he could not have parted with him to this distant country, without knowing that the risk he ran was very great, yet I fear, that these 3 years-of-succes in which he had heard only of success & good health-of this son, may have removed all his doubts & fears & lulled his mind into a state of perfect security, how hard a task is it to awake it to such [sorrow?]:

Poor Temple lived beloved by all who knew him & I believe there never was any person more generally and sincerely regretted, The families where he visited lament him as a relation but most particularly General⁷⁸ & Mrs. Trent: who I really believe loved him almost as a son. The good old (6) General attended his funeral, and Richard says when they were returning the Gen^L went up to him & pressed his hand but was so much affected that he could not speak, I have since called on Mrs Trent & found her extremely low, they intend leaving this country in Oct: & Mrs Trent told me she had just finished a keepsake for each of her two favorites, (meaning Richard & Temple,) the day before poor Temples death. I hope you will know Gen,^L & Mrs: Trent in England, for she is a most charming sweet tempered woman & tho he is a little odd in some respects yet I am sure a better man does not exist.

I send this by the Glory which however is not thought to be a very safe ship, being a very bad sailer & the same ~~in~~ which so much wickedness & trouble happened, on her passage out, the particulars of which I wrote in a former letter, those disturbances gave people a bad opinion of her but as the captain who was a party in those troubles is killed & the others who were engaged in them are not to return in her I think it very probable that she may arrive safe Mr: Biss is staying with us at present and will will [sic] continue some days longer, indeed we shall part with him with regret whenever he leaves us, (7) he is so quiet and good humoured, the Cadets who came out with him were marched off to drill in a few days after their arrival, but Sir Henry procured leave for him to stay a little time with us partly because we wished to have his company & partly because he has had a little bile on his stomach, & therefore [sic] we wished him to be a little seasoned before he went to his own management he seems to have very good health & spirits, and I dare say he will do very well here, he loses no time by staying with us, as we have masters of all languages about the house, & he is very industrious & studies from morning till night, I am sure he will be thought a wonder if he goes on with the same anxiety, we have another very good young man staying with us, who is likely to remain some time as he has been very ill with a bowel complaint, and is so weak that he cannot join his regiment; he belongs to the Cavalry, & is Brother in law to Mr [Phinners ?] at the bar, an old friend of Sir Henry's, your friend the Dr: (as we call him) Mr Melliss⁷⁹ is an extraordinary being, a true Scotchman he has been very amusing to the young men, by his pretending to understand every subject that is started, & he is (8) as easy at first sight as if he had known you for an hundred years, he staid at our home as long as he had leave to be on shore, one day he came to dinner in such a dirty shirt

⁷⁸ Major-General Thomas Trent.

⁷⁹ James Melliss (1781-1846) was a Company surgeon in Bengal.

& stockings that Biss who sat opposite to him could not eat for laughing to see him in that dirty trim talking away as is [sic] he had been my lord Duke, he puffed away about his introductions here & when they came to be explained they turned out to be a single letter from Miss Saunders to Mrs Floyer, a very vulgar woman a majors wife who is over head & ears in debt, the Dr: brought her out a box which procured him a dinner when he delivered it safe, & that was all, he is a curious fellow all together, but not surprising to us who see hundreds of the same sort of ragamuffins come out evry [sic] year fresh from Scotland, & like him they all pretend to be great men I have given him some Argus Pheasant feathers for you five papers done up with a set of feathers in each, that is a plume of small ones for the front of the head & a long one to twist round as a bandeau, those you may dispose of to any friend you wish to oblige, & when cut & dressed a little they will make very handsome ornaments, besides those I gave him 14 good feathers of the best we could (9) pick out of 2 entire birds, & from them Betsy wishes you make two sets, one for Mrs. H. Williams and one for Mrs. Morgan, and Betsy wishes you to add one or two feathers to each besides the set.

The direction is to Mrs: Morgan is at the Revd Dr. Morgans Ely. I don't know who I shall be able to write to by this opportunity, but I fear but few of my friends as our notice has been very short, so pray beg them not to be offended, for my inclination is very good, if the government will allow me time

I think in future, the quantity of made up milinery [sic] you have sent this time will be sufficiency at each time only with the addition of two hats or bonnets for each of us & some fashionable materials unmade of all sorts, that is I mean you should send 3 dresses for each 3 caps & two bonnets 6 pair of shoes & 6 pair of gloves a very little good jewelry & whatever you think proper unmade the comb with Wedgwood ornaments is very pretty I have seen the same but worn with an ornament in the front to correspond the blue necklace too is very pretty & so are the earrings [sic], I have copied the Turban which I think very handsome, & the pink cap, I wish you always to send a little unmade (10) material like the things you send as I can then copy them for myself & give up the originals to Betsy who you know does not like that sort of business. Your dilicate [sic] stratagem succeeded very well, but it was a little indiscreet to put such a suspicious direction upon it. I hope you have seen Mr. Lane & Mr. Livingstone before this & that the moor womans dress has not been so unfortunate as the Gentoo cloth. I am sure Mr. Prosser did his best for he is a good natured young man as can be, but I know the Custom house officers are very strict in their searches & never will let a bit of chintz or shawl escape if

they can help it. I have mentioned hats or bonnets to be sent, pray let them be of the plainest form that is work straw or chip, and as long as round hats turned up on one side are worn I shall prefer them to any other for our heads get so old fashioned that we dont know how to manage any thing whimsical at the same time we wish them to fashionable, just what you or I should have bought for ourselves in the spring. You say you don't know how to act about giving letters to young men, I will tell you; put all your letters into the publick packet and give them a few lines merely to introduce them and then it does not signify when they deliver them (11) if they will take charge of seeds & promise to keep them in their cabins it will always be an advantage to send by them, and when you meet with one you can trust like Lane or Livingstone you can send gloves or such small things as will not keep in the hold & request them to keep them dry in their cabins letters certainly are best sent by post, for however anxious an officer of a ship may be to deliver them yet perhaps he cannot get leave to come on shore for two or three after the ship arrives, whereas all that comes by post is sent over to us immediately We wish you to understand this clearly, as it is the greatest pleasure we can recieve, to see & converse with any person who has seen you, & as for Sir Henry he is so much dilighted [sic] when he gets hold of a Herefordshire man, that he talks to him all day without ceasing Herefordshire people & Herefordshire news are his dilight [sic]. Biss has delighted him, & the first night they entered upon the subject we had much to do to get him to bed at midnight, & Betsy says he began the subject again as soon as his eyes were open, he has talked of Lane ever since he went away & will be glad enough to see him again. I begin to be very economical of my paper for I have made this a long letter, and it is such a one as I hope I shall never have occasion to send you again. I am sure of tomorrow for writing & I shall employ it busily, I hope to write to Nancy green & the Thoburns, but I always begin with you, ~~but~~ I hope they will not be prevented from writing to us even if I should not have time to write to them for indeed our friends letters are our greatest comforts, remember me affetionately [sic] to them all, and pray give my namesake & Jimmy a kiss each. God preserve you all is the prayer of

Yours ever affectionately M Symonds.

Aug:st the 12th, 1804

(11) Mr^s. James

No 39 Bishopgate Street within

London

Letter-046-XX-10-1804 (Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 212r-216v) [Mary Symonds?] to Unknown recipient [possibly a copy in a good hand], February 1804

(1) Madras St. Thome Feb. 10, 1804

I wrote to you by the Glory a Ship that sailed [sic] from this place 7 or 8 weeks ago , & in it I thanked you for the things you so kindly did for me but that ship sailed so soon after I had unpacked them that I cou'd not give you the account I wished. had we opened the things that had not opened themselves on the Voiage [sic] we should have spoiled what was good, and I expected there wou'd be but little. I have now the pleasure to say that all my pickles and Ketchup came in perfect order. The Ketchup is as fresh as a mushroom from the field, and we eat it every day with our fish. The Sea runs close to us & repays us for it's [sic] noisy roaring in the night, by fresh fish every day which we see caught, at least we see the boats that are employed in the business .

I am sorry for the trouble you have had about the Currant Jelly but I find that I need not trouble any of my friend for preserve in future, as I becomes more acquainted with the country I find the less need of them the ladies who come to this country are of necessity often changing their place & those who know are not here to to [sic] tell us what they discover

I find now that the Mango fruit, used green makes the finest Jelly I ever eat in (2) my life it will not keep above a month but the trees bear more or less all the year & we of course do not want currant jelly for there is not the least difference between the flavors of this & white currant Jelly we have Colaccas⁸⁰ for tarts much superior to Goosberries [sic] & several other fruits of the

⁸⁰ *Carissa spinarum*.

same nature particularly one called Billimby⁸¹ & another called Aranelly⁸² besides which the green Mangoes make us apple puddings & pies every day. In puddings they are very much like & I tell the young men when they first come that they are our Indian apples, they are like a codling when it is very young & the boys do not discover the difference between the Mango & the apple.

The Mushroom catchup & pickles are of great value to us as we have no vinegar that will make them good, if we had the Walnuts & Mushrooms, neither of which we can get, and the Vinegar is excessively bad except what comes from England which is so valuable & the Country Vinegar so cheap, that the people always adulterate it with Toddy Vinegar, a kind of Arrack vinegar which has a tast [sic] perfectly offensive

My sister has promised to do me a few Rasberries [sic] & strawberries & damsons which are certainly flavours that we have nothing to compare to but being as wise as I am now, I only wish to trouble my friends for pickles & those three kinds of fruit I am (3) most exceedingly [sic] obliged to you for the trouble you have had which I am now ashamed to think of.

I am truly happy to hear that your little ones are so well I do not doubt of their being well educated under your care, for I am sure you will not give them false notions of vanity on one hand nor meanness [sic] on the other, & I think, they are very happily placed in a school of innocent children. I am only grieved to hear you complain so much of your own health, which I had hoped was mending, I trust you are not over anxious about any thing since happiness does not depend in place or riches & an exalted situation is no certain mark of a noble mind-or a clear understanding. I am obliged to you for being pleased with the credit Sir Henry gained in the affair you mention we were utterly astonished at any account in the English papers, who sent it God knows. I received it from three places-it was not quite accurately stated but I assure you not more to his honour than he deserved nor near so much so. He behaved nobly, almost unsupported utterly so till the last. What has been the effect of an attempt to do his duty here, can only be told when we meet, at which time I hope we shall look back upon those trials with satisfaction. But the worst is they have injured his health very much, the Climate is more than he is equal to without persecution. He has had a fever of above three months this year which had

⁸¹ Star fruit, *Averrhoa carambola*.

⁸² Possibly *Phyllanthus acidus*, or gooseberry tree, *Cicca disticha* L. See "Cicca disticha, Aranelly, Harfarooori, Hind. - A small tree bearing a round acid fruit, the country gooseberry, wood inferior. Hort. Garden 31". (https://archive.org/stream/b28708891/b28708891_djvu.txt)

at one time reduced him very (4) much. He has lately, thank God been recovering very fast if the business does not over set him, but our seasons have been very severe this year. I have not the pleasure to know the Gentleman you speak of. Mrs. Williams's Nephew. I believe he has not been to this place since we came here. I have heard my mother speak of him some years ago & Mr. Gwillim Sen^r mentioned him in a letter

If Captain Pendergrass came here I hope he will call but I assure the favor is all done to us for the Captains are in much request in the different families here & so much engaged in business, disposing [sic] of their investments that we can seldom see them, however desirous we may be-

I am obliged to you for thinking of us when you heard of the fire which was a bad one & consumed a considerable quantity of grain.⁸³ But it seldom happens that lives are lost in this country by fire for the houses are never more than one floor above another & every window is like a door that it must be an extraordinary case if any one was burnd [sic] & unless by choice as it happens few English families live in the Black town & the families that do are Armenians & wealthy natives & their houses of Stucco & bricks could [sic] not easily be burned-the great destruction in cases of fire is amongst the poor natives; but their houses & all in them are of hardly any value & generally only a ground floor

I said nobody need be burned but by choice-which may seem a strong speech to you but it happens in India that people sometimes choose it there are some marks of the Worship of fire amongst the Hindoos we read in their stories of persons hoping [sic] to save their Children throwing themselves (5) into the flames to deprecate the wrath of that angry Element which they look upon as a deity they daily make oblations to fire in every home of pious Hindoos. But this superstition [sic] is to be found in the utmost extent amongst the Perses⁸⁴ many of whom inhabit the Islands of Bombay. If the fire was to catch your gown there, not a servant amongst the Perses (who are the attendants there) would put it out nor even if it was his own, He would not offend the God by attempting to snatch the victim he had seized.

⁸³ A major fire at Madras on February 14, 1803 consumed 1000 houses. (Thomas Tegg, Chronology, or the Historian's Companion, 1824).

⁸⁴ Parsis, Persian Zoroastrians who emigrated to India and settled in particular in Bombay and other parts of Gujarat.

Perhaps you might have read in the papers of a terrible fire at Bombay since that at Madras, it was of shocking extent & hundreds as I am assured suffered [sic] voluntarily nay rushed into the flames

The Admiral who was laying at Anchor near sent the Officers & Sailors to aid in quelling the flames, but could not prevail with the natives to act they threw away the water out of the buckets given them & refused, spite of all threats, to throw it on the flames & their little shops contained [sic] bales of shawls, muslins, silks, spices & chest of gold, these were reserved from the flames & their owners forced out of their houses & their rich merchandise given them, yet so biggotted are they to their superstitions that they carried them back back & sate [sic] on them, patiently [sic] waiting till the flames surrounded them when they & their godds [sic] were devoured by the fire

If you cou'd but be here for about a week how you wou'd be amused [sic] with your notion of reforming the people. the Europeans of every description wou'd hardly make one in a thousand of the natives, when I came here I thought it most awfull, wonderful it is certainly to see that (6) we rule these people absolutely, & not a boat of ours can touch their shores, without being dashed to atoms by the high surf, the planks of the boats with which they land us are sewed, together with threads of the Coacoa nut & are saved by yielding to the pressure but cou'd not be used by us,--yet here we are masters of the Soil-supported by their disunion & distractions. yet in this state ruled as they are by us terrified by our nod, they despise us, as beings little better than brutes they wou'd not taste of any thing we had touched, scarcely that we had looked at, indeed some Casts [sic] will will [sic] not eat what we have looked at, the Brahmins, who think that all learning & wisdom is centered in them may not have their Vests touched by our cloaths, without being obliged to go through a purification. the cloaths in which they enter our rooms are stripped off at the door of their own.

The name of Christian they hold in abhorance [sic] beyond even their own outcasts the Pariahs. The manners of the Hindoos are exactly now what they were before Moses wrote and are likely to be the same as much longer

The Musleman [sic] are crushed by our power but you know enough of the history of Turks to judge that they are not likely to turn Christians, the Portuguese are a wretched race, a mixture of those & the outcasts, of these people_ The English are only here for a few years, as it is contrary to the Policy at present to settle a Colony_ There can be no marriage with a native

woman of any sort. We have great numbers of people offsprings of the English by the lowest creatures, some of these (7) are bred up for fine Ladies & Gentlemen & called English-great numbers the children of poor Officers soldiers & are by these wretched drabs are here to be seen, & the Company & Government here have established two large Schools for their reception, one for boys the other for girls there are at least 400 of each, they are well taught & the boys bred to be writers & c the girls are Married to Soldiers & their offspring will in time be called English a shocking thing enough, for they are a wretched race of evil disposition & full of disease_The Schools are not of long establishment so what the boys may be is not easy to judge the girls do not do for service as was hoped, those that have gone have been all corrupted and indeed the native mothers & relations will not here [sic] of their being unmarried after twelve years old as husband must be found be he black, white, old, or what not, to save the reproc[sic] of passing twelve or fourteen years unmarried is to them an utter disgrace and although they have an excellent Clergyman to attend them, who is indefatigable in his duty such is the influence of the Mothers on these children, that the worst consequence wou'd follow if the desire were not complied with. It often follows their Marriage for chastity is a virtue little known in this Country, except amongst the People of Cast, & their people are altogether carefull of their women tho they never confine them, they are sometimes led away by Europeans; but not often, they are bad enough amongst (8) one another.

The greater part of the people who call themselves Porteguese but who are only low Pariahs are of the Roman Church & I perceive no difference between their Idolatry & that of the Heathen, they Heathen indeed have the advantage for tho they have no worship in Spirit, all is mere ceremonies yet their discipline makes theirs clean, sober, & orderly: whereas the Christians of the Catholicks which is quite as much lost in ceremonies has not the advantage of these wholesome [sic] restraints & the people who are of that Church are the vilest miserable wretches drunken & abandoned these half Cast children are all that the English Government endeavors to reform or inst[ruct?] It is not the approved Policy to attempt changing the Religion of the people It woud [sic] be impracticable to the people of Cast & the others appear so much worse for it that it is not done Protestant Missionaries make converts & have got very decent congregations they Baptize annually great numbers & will if their zeal continues I dare say in some ages work a change to the advantage of those poor people bred in ignorance & vice & thought unworthy by the Heathens of Cast to be inst[ruct?] they look on them as beings without souls & never let them enter their places of Worship. All they know is that the[re] are beings of Superior power to themselves some Benevolent & some diabolical. The Benevolent they suppose sufficiently

inclined to relieve & aid them, but the Malignity of the Evil Powers they dread their whole attention is therefore to sacrifice to these Demons to avert, their wrath to, save them from (9) Devils & Giants & Serpents. Their great Goddess is the queen of the Serpents of the infernal regions so they kill sheep &c-and so far fear her that can hardly be prevailed [sic] on to kill a Snake & never do it of their own will. We had an immense Cobra Capella or Hooded Snake⁸⁵ killed in one Garden two of the horse keepers aided by Mr. Clark in the slaughter, but they so far feared the vengeance [sic] of the black Goddess, that they burned the snake in all form as it had been a man-and the next evening hearing that they were about to make a ceremony over it I went to the end of the Garden under the Cocoa nut trees, to see it. It was in a dark night but they had abundance of torches the people were assembled round with all the Old kettles & tubs & watering pots by way of drums which they beat incessantly, to charm the demons The wives of the men had previously sate [sic] over the bones & ashes of the snake and cried an hour, these bones were now washed with milk , hid up in a piece of cloth & dressed with bunches & garlands of flours [sic]._The men danced a kind of frantick dance every woman & man clinging round each others neck & howling as if in an agony of grief they tore their hair & spread it over their shoulders & addressed the snake that is the bones near which they burnd [sic] incense [sic]._the making of their frequent addresses was to exculpate themselves.--: O why did you come out (9) of your hole. If you had concealed yourself we should not have been compelled by these people to kill you &c

There were half a dozen of these black things dancing & the lights & trees wou'd have been a good scene for a pantomine [sic].____

Letter_048_MS_10-1804 (Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 229r-233v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, October 14, 1804

(1) Madras Oct^r the 14th 1804.

⁸⁵ Naja naja, the spectacled cobra.

My Dear Hetty

I hope you will receive my two letters by the Glory, the one was a good long story, & to say truth I believe you must think me a sad gossip for I am never so happy as when scribbling to my good dear friends and now I am going to scold like any thing, because you want to put a bridle in my mouth, I love to speak from my heart, & tell you all that passes here, piping hot: surely there should be no reserves amongst us you must have misunderstood what Sir Henry said about the young men, but James & you are so touchy! [sic] I assure you Betsy & I have attacked Sir Henry roundly about what he said of that little fellow Longdill, & he protests he did not say a word that ought to have been taken up in the way you take it, he says he only meant [sic], that you put yourself to more expence and trouble than was necessary in entertaining people of whom we know nothing & perhaps only see for an hour or two before they sail, If he makes a wrong statement I desire you will give him a lecture upon it, Betsy says you have no right to be [pangy?] about any thing he says because you encouraged him in his sauciness to others & helped (2) so much to spoil him. I assure you your letter put me in a grand stew, because I had just sent off my letter with some stuff about the Scotch Dr. which I should sooner have bled than written if I had known how you were fidgeting, but we all laughed so much about him that I could not resist writing, but what then I am very glad you sent him for if he had not been here we should all have been as dull as Posts, with all our correctness, an odd character of that sort thrown in amongst us, is like the lemon juice in a bowl of punch I don't know what Sir Henry has said to you about the young men coming [sic] here but this I do know that he is always glad enough to see them & most unwilling to part with them, & particularly the Herefordshire he would fain have persuaded Biss to be sick or any thing else to have kept him here, to be sure he is a darling, so mild so modest, a thousand times too good for this country I own I am half in love with him. Sir Henry never allows Barrington to take up his quarters any where but with us when he is at Madras, And I am sure he would have given a good round sum to have kept Lane a little longer. I am very angry with you believ [sic] me, 'tho not in my heart but what stuff do you talk about your own inferiority, many come up who is superior to you, in this place I am sure there are not half a dozen persons whose connexions (3) are half as well off, & those half dozen & fewer here either by wretched poverty or disgraceful conduct, if you would do us honour hold you [sic] head as high as your neighbours; an honestman is the noblest work of God, but if you want instances I will give two or three from the heads of our society The first lady here after the Governors wife & Betsy, is the daughter of a Douglas the taylor who lived near Charing Cross

two others who hold their heads next are daughters of a Mrs Goldfinch a Hosier in Lombard Street, here are five sisters all well married in the eye of the world at least, daughters of an inferior custom house officer who lives on Tower hill Two more great ladies are the daughters of an Innkeeper at Hounslow two more daughters of a slop shop at Portsmouth, & now I have given you all the heads of the place the rest are all Bastards black or white the foremost of whom may generally have the pleasure of seeing their mothers [?] fry pancakes or sell fish in the native markets, now I think I have said enough upon this subject, & too much but I really was worried about it, because I know a months residence here would set you to rights in this matter.

You will acknowledge that I spoil paper enough when I tell you that my Indian correspondets [sic] are as numerous as my English ones, and many of (4) them so kind as to favour me with a letter every week Biss is amongst the number of my correspondents but he certainly does not trouble me too often, poor fellow he has not much time at present, he has been unwell with a bowel complaint since he left us and as soon as we heard of it Sir Henry wrote to desire he would come down here & be nursed, but he soon got better & as he was afraid of losing time in his profession he declined the offer, however we are to have him for a few sic] weeks before he joins his regiment in January. I am nursing up a very pretty little Terrier puppy for him, which I got from Mrs. Trent, it is a beautiful little wretch but so mischievous [sic] that he is a great plague, it is my constant companion night & day, We sit with all the doors & windows open for air, & the breeze blows everything about, which he scrambles up immediately he has eat me a fine flower out of my cap & several bows of ribbon while I have been writing, and I hope he won't tell his master any of my secrets, but I must trust to his humour, for he has eat two sheets of my letters I am very glad you like your friend the cockatoo, it is a hardy bird, & likely enough to live, I dare say he is entertaining enough in a winter evening, but I am surprised James has so much patience with his impudence & mischeif [sic] in biteing [sic] the chairs & things. We shall be glad enough to see Prosser (5) back again he is a rare man for carrying things home & we have always some trifling or other to send for your information, did the Pickled cocoa nut blossom arrive safe, ? & could you take it out of the jar to see it? Tis a most beautiful thing when fresh, I must tell you again about the things you sent us this time, for fear my former letter should miscarry well then, to give you the worst first, some of the jam pots went off: whether in their zeal for the good cause, they dreamed, as thy [sic] lay in the hold, that the ship was attacked; or fired a royal salute on General Biss's landing I know not but so it was the pots were broke & the jam spilt: but don't be fretting & greiving [sic] after 'spilt milk' a great deal of it came safe & good, we have picked a few excellent strawberries raspberries & white plumbs & all the Pickles

Catchup & Raspberry vinegar arrived without a crack, Betsy has never had such pretty caps to her head before particularly the two white sattin [sic] ones, one with a geranium flower & the other a net trimming. "It fits," & she looks quite comfortable in them, but as for fal lals⁸⁶ she certainly never will understand how to stick them on. I have resigned every cap to her excep [sic] that with the pink ribbon, & I took that because I know she would make (6) herself like a Cockatoo with that red top knot yet it is a very pretty cap I have worn it with great credid [sic]: & lent it out & out again for a pattern a lady called here yesterday & ran away with it to copy, & the night caps you sent have been in great request, they are the most comfortable things I have seen a long time & they also are lent out, in short I have much ado to keep any of my new things at home the dark gowns have not made their appearance yet but their season is coming in, which will be after the monsoon, I am delighted to hear such an excellent account of your health & nancy greens. But this sweet cup is dashed with bitter when I think of poor dear Neds suffering so much, just as he got into his house I hope to God they will do well notwithstanding little temporary inconveniences; would I had power to make them, & all my frends [sic], as happy as they wish I am sure my inclinations would never prevent me. I am truly sorry for Mr. J-Gwillims⁸⁷ disappointments in his profession, his is certainly a hard case, for a man who has ever done his duty might surely expect to be better off at 40 years of age. I think I can acquit myself of a charge of revengefulness for I feel just as much for him as if he had never given harm to those I love, & yet if he had not, it is probably he would have saved himself all he now suffers. I should be very happy to hear from him, we were old friends & I can never forget many little kindnesses I have received from (7) him, but I cannot solicit a correspondence, having been so unfortunate in a former effort. I allude to the letter, I wrote to John Gwillim my foolish warmth of heart must needs set me, to waste time & paper, & obtrude myself upon him, who has never had the manners to to [sic] acknowledge my attention & therfore [sic] I suppose thought it impertinent; what these, my disappointment is not very great, I have lived long enough to know that all flesh is dust, & not to expect perfection in human nature John is one of those lucky pleasant people who will always have friends tho he should never do any thing to deserve them & he is not the only instance of that sort that has come under my observation. Pray God send I may meet those friends I have left in England, still friends & then I won't complain of the world, tho the longer we live & the more we see of it the blunter our feelings get & I think I shall never feel the same sorrow I have felt, but who will turn truant this I am, however sure of, that 'tho I feel pain at having done more than my duty, I should have felt a great deal more pain if I had

⁸⁶ Fal-lals A piece of frippery or finery; a showy article of dress or personal adornment (OED).

⁸⁷ John Gwillim, Henry Gwillim's older brother, was an apothecary in Hereford.

done less than I ought Well let us leave unpleasant subjects & unkind people to mend themselves, whilst we seek for better.

My friends Gen[era]l & Mrs. Trent go home in the same fleet which takes this, they wish to know some of our friends & therefore [sic] I shall give them a letter to you and Richard Clarke intends to give them an introduction to his father & uncle: Mrs. Trent is a good charming woman & the General is a good natured well disposed (8) man as any alive, they don't wish to mix much with Indians, but to live in a quiet domestick [sic] way their income is about 18 hundred a year as long as he lives, they will not be very shewy but I suppose they will keep a carriage, & if the money will hold out they will have two houses, he likes a good dinner & is so much an Indian that the dishes must be pretty highly seasoned if they are made ones, you see I am giving you a hint & to make it complete I will tell you that his favourite meat is grass lamb. I think the Bullocks would be very pleasing acquaintances to them if you can bring it about, & if they live in London, it will be somewhere about Fitzroy Square, the General is flattered beyond measure by the attention of Ladies, & if you attend to him & pay him a few compliments he will talk to you a long summers day, & give you a very good account of India & many particulars about our family.

Poor Temple, Richard & I have had excellent [sic] friends in them, I have spent many days & some weeks with them, as happily as days & weeks could pass in India I must beg you will be attentive to them for my sake for like a sorry spendthrift, I have no means of paying one debt but by contracting another. This simily [sic] comes a little too home to me, for I have been a prodigal in my way & am not without pangs of compunction, but now I am growing disagreeable [sic] again. As my mother says an hours conversation would be worth (9) a bag full of letters. I may have mislead you about the palampores, coming in the Castle Eden I sent them off by that ship & have a receipt for them & the snuff from the chief mate, but he took them as a friend of Mr. Toussaints & probably he might leave them for him at St Helena as he Mr Toussaint, was at that time in China & would touch at St Helena on his way home, so I hope you know a great deal more about them than we do just now.

I cannot pretend to contradict your accusation respecting the dates of letters but something may be said in excuse, which is this I frequently begin to write a week or more before the time of the ships sailing which is always uncertain till the last, & I leave my letters without dates till then because I think the latter the intelligence the more satisfactory it is to you, & then in the hurry at the last moment I seal them up & forget it altogether, but I will tell you how to

find out without refering [sic] to my dates, you will always see what time the ship leaves this in the papers, & you may rely that my letter is never sent off till then. I have not made this a very entertaining epistle & I fear you will not think yourself rewarded for the trouble of reading it, but it will shew you that (God be praised) we are all well & as happy as --- our neighbours.

I am an ungrateful jade for not writing to Mr Thos. James, & yet I fear it is too late to do it this time, but I (10) will the next, I owe him a letter for the little piece he wrote for you a long, long time ago. You never mention Dance⁸⁸ in your letters, do you ever hear any thing of him? I have written a tedious epistle to Mr. Clarkes which I enclose to you that you may read it if you have time & patience so to do, & forward it to him when an opportunity offers by a private hand for I would not wish to put him to the expence of Postage for it I have desired Richard to tell his father that such a letter is lying at your house in order that he may direct any of his Scotch frends [sic] to call upon you for it or direct you where to send it.

I believe I have nothing more to say as you will hear from all hands of the loss of poor Temple & I have given all the particulars of an event which will afford you no satisfaction to hear of, & for that as well as other reasons, will give me much pain to repeat. I beg you will remember me in the kindest manner to all (frends [sic]?), & tell Mrs. Shepheard that I wrote her a ~~long~~ letter by the Prince of Wales, & I hope to God she will receive it before you get this, but at present we are under great apprehensions for the safety of that ship; she met with a terrible storm off the Cape, and as she had not arrived at St Helena six weeks after the ships, which sailed in company with her from hence it is feared she is lost, with every soul on board, many of the

[letter stops here in the records]

**Letter_051_MS_10-1804 (Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 242r-247v) Mary Symonds to Thomas Clarke,⁸⁹
October 14, 1804**

⁸⁸ Possibly Perhaps George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) or his brother Nathaniel Dance-Holland (1735-1811), both painters and founding members of the Royal Academy.

⁸⁹ Father of Richard Clarke.

(1) My dear Sir,

I am greatly flattered by your kind letter which encourages me to trouble you again with some of my tittle tattle. I believe Sir H. Gwillim has written to you several times since the date of your letter to me; and I suppose he has given you his reasons for not writing before (if he had any) tho' I really believe he had none, indeed great allowances may be made for him, for he has suffered a great deal of pain, and uneasiness in this country, and during the four months of the year in which the land winds prevail, he is incapable of doing any thing from the extreme irritation of his nerves. Unfortunately he has not been able to avoid those unpleasant winds hitherto, owing to the absence of Sir B. Sullivan who has been at Bombay, acting as Recorder, since the death of Sir Wm. Syer.⁹⁰ I hope next year we shall go to Bangalore, which is a delightful climate; when the nights are so close at Madras that we are almost suffocating, we should there, be glad to wrap ourselves in shawls and Blankets. Besides the particular effect of this climate on Sir Henry's constitution, the peculiarity of his temper or nerves (or whatever it be) is such that he seems incapable of doing particular things except at particular times, and I have often known him very desirous of writing when some oppression of his spirits, has made him unable to persuade himself to set about it. I was very much diverted with the humourous passage in your letter, upon the difference between acting and thinking, but why cannot it wait [?] (2) the account of your own plan? Surely there is nothing unreasonable in a man's promising himself many years of enjoyment after your age (at least I hope there is not) what is forty eight with a good constitution? All your amusements are rational and may be enjoyed at any time of life; besides which you are only returning to your former habits, not beginning a new way of living. I could shew you a score of wise men from fifty to sixty years of age who have hitherto known no enjoyment, except what they derived from the hope of spending agreeably [sic] the trust they have been scraping together, and in that hope have just taken to themselves wives of about seventeen, they talk continually of the happiness they shall have in returning to England. Good men! they forget what havock [sic] forty summers have made in their own constitutions, and amongst the friends they are thinking to return to, they flatter themselves with the hope of enjoying the same sports and amusements which delighted their boyish days. Such men, you will say, are far enough out of the right way to perceive their error and I believe it may be so, too

⁹⁰ Sir William Syer was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bombay.

soon, for is it not better they should go on blindfold as long as old Mechlin⁹¹ did. What signifies it, how a man is made happy if he be so [?] -

When ignorance is bliss

'Tis folly to be Wise.

I fear you won't like my morality if I talk so lightly of old men marrying girls of 16 or 17: to make themselves happy; however the girls who many think furnish me with an excuse, for I do assure you I have known several instances, in which they were not sacrificed by avaricious parents but their own sordid dispositions have made them prefer age and riches, when they might have married men suitable to themselves in years & with fair prospects, but without much ready money and when this is the case you will allow 'tis no great matter. Don't you think me very impertinent to run on in this manner, to you? I dare say you do. I shall therefore try to give you pleasure by choosing an [sic] subject, and by that means, hope to divert your attention from the faults of the writer. I cannot expect to succeed better in this attempt, than by saying something of our (3) good Richard. He has [sic] greatly pleased with your last letter in which you proposed his returning home at the expiration of Sir Henry's term, and was in such excessive spirits about it, and expressed his joy in such a strong manner, that I (who never heard he had any particular dislike to this country) could not help asking him how it happened, that he was so much charmed with this plan, which did not seem to offer greater advantage, than those he had thought of before and particularly as he was disappointed in his favourite hope of procuring a Writership. He said it was true, he wished for that appointment, because it would be a certain provision, but he had always thought of our leaving this country with ~~resigned~~ great dejection, tho he had not mentioned it, had always imagined, he should be solitary, & uncomfortable when we were gone, & should have no one near him whom he could actually call a friend, I believe this painful reflection had arisen in his mind, or at least had been greatly increased by the loss of poor Mr. Temple, with whom Richard always lived in habits of great friendship; they met every day in their offices, and had I believe a very great regard for each other; the sudden death of Mr. Temple made a very strong impression on poor Richards mind, perhaps it affected him more, owing to the very afflicting news he had just received from you, & Mrs. Clarke. I feel inclined to say something on the subject of your late severe trial, and I heartily wish it was in my power to

⁹¹ Perhaps Nicaise of Mechlin, mentioned by Diderot in his "Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See". Or perhaps in reference to old Mechlin, a Flemish town famous for its lace. For two stories about the folly of the inhabitants of this town, see *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1852, pp. 32

comfort you in any way, but I am convinced it would be impertinent in me, ignorant as I am, to attempt to console you, who are so well acquainted with the source from whence alone consolation can be drawn on such occasions. It must be evidence to every grateful mind, that our benevolent Creator always accompanies his heaviest visitations with some circumstances to soften and reconcile them to us, & for that purpose (I am persuaded) directed that your letter should arrive at the time it did, to sooth [sic] poor Richard's troubled (4) mind, with the pleasing prospect of seeing England and you so much sooner than he before expected Since that time he has been quite well and happy. I shall not trouble you by relating any particulars of poor Temple's death, because I know you will hear the circumstances of it from Richard, & I have already written it to Mrs. James, but it is a sad task to to [sic] write or to read it. Richard has not yet given up the Tamoul language, & he is also studying the Persian. His knowledge of the native languages, gives him an opportunity of making himself so well acquainted with the customs & manners of these curious people, that I cannot presume to tell you any thing about the men, whilst you have such an excellent correspondent. The women however I may venture to speak of, as they are so much kept up that no man can have an opportunity of describing the higher classes. The Hindoos do not confine their women as the Mussulmans do, but yet as every rich man chooses to appropriate a great many to himself, he is very jealous, and unwilling to have them seen, particularly [sic] by Europeans. he can have no reliance on these womens honour because [sic] he sets them so bad an example, for by the Shaster⁹² he is forbid to have more than one Wife, and yet those who can afford it marry 5 or 6, and keep 20 or 30 women besides.

The moorish Ladies are never seen by any man who is more distantly related than a brother, and as I have had the honour of visiting two or three families moorish Princes, I will endeavour to give you some idea of the comforts of the Haram [sic] or Zenana. The Mussulmans always live together in families, that is, all the brothers in one house, and all their Wives, concubines, and female slaves in ~~another~~ the Zenana belonging to it, which is a detached building, with a small garden belonging to it, with a high wall which encloses the whole space allotted to the women. We entered in through a large strong gate; from which we (5) went into a narrow passage, and were then met by four of the ladies who took our hands & lead us through a square court yard; on the sides of which the apartments are built. The Eldest son's first wife is more honoured than any of the other women, unless his mother be alive who is called the Bugam [sic], & 'tho she be a widow she loses none of her authority she is not however allowed to wear any jewels, all her ornaments go

⁹² The law books or sacred writings of the Hindus. From Skt. śāstra, 'a rule,' a religious code, a scientific treatise. (Hobson-Jobson, p. 824).

immediately on her husbands death to the Eldest son's wives, but such is the respect paid to her that none of the women, not even her daughters are allowed to speak at the same time sh[e] does, nor to sit when she stands, tho but for a moment, neith[er] have they the same sort of seat in her presence, hers being a little elevated, whilst they must sit on the ground, which has two cloths, spread over the mat, for that purpose, the one thick & striped with red, or blue, the other which lies over that, is white & thin, to shew the stripes of the under one thru The ladies have a great many cushions & pillows to support their bodies and limbs as they throw themselves about in various attitudes forming beautiful groups. They wear a great quantity of thin drapery which does not conceal the person much, this dress consists of a pair of very full trowsers [sic] reaching down to the feet, which are generally made of a very rich, crimson sattin [sic] wove or embroidered over with gold figures, they have also a little sort of waistcoat, made of silk and richly embroidered, but it is so small & short that the whole of the ribs are quite bare, over this they wear a very full gown made of thin transparent gauze or muslin edged all round with gold lace, it is fastened at the throat ~~with~~ by a single button only, some have sleeves to the gowns & others have none in the latter case they half cover the arms with (6) jewels. They have also a piece of thin gauze or netting richly embroidered at the ends & edged round with a broad border of gold, it is the veil; and is about the length of a shawl, this they twist and throw about their figures in a playful manner as they converse shading a small part of the back of the head. The only unpleasant thing in their dress is a large nose ring, which is worn by the married women by way of distinction. The widows (however young they may be) are obliged amongst other mortifications to give up this graceful ornamen[t] which they think more becoming than any other. One of the ladies we went to visit is sister to the Nabob Wallajah,⁹³ he is said to have been a man of elegant manners, and a very fine ~~figure~~ person. This sister is about 70 years old; her features seem to have been quite regular and beautiful & if one may judge from her fine hands & what remains of her form, she must have been a most delicate figure, tho' small, she is rather below the middle size Her house contains about 3 hundred women & children; one of whom is her daughter, a widow of about six & twenty, she is tall, and stout beautifully proportioned, and (I think if she had the European red & white complexion she would be the handsomest woman I ever saw, yet it is not the white we want in her skin so much as the red, for she is by no means darker than the Turks, but she is extremely sallow, as all the moor women are owing to their confinement & the heat of the climate. Fifteen or twenty of the other women are the Bugum's, son's, wives, 40 or 50 more are their Concubines, and all the rest are slaves. A concubine amongst the mussulmans is not a contemptible person; tho inferior to the wives, she has many

⁹³ Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah (1717–1795), Nawab of the Carnatic from 1749 until his death.

rights & privileges in the house & is entitled to a part of the man's property when he dies. Every lady is attended by about eight women constantly. One holds her beetel⁹⁴ [sic] box, which is a little gold square casket; another prepares the beetel leaves & presents them to her, a third holds (7) a little gold vase, which is sometimes set with jewels (but you will say this is too dirty to mention) yet it is not so bad as it seems at first, for their mouths are constantly filled with the red juice of the fresh beetel, which they never swallow; two more servants attend with fans to cool her & keep off flies, a sixth holds her handkerchief & the others give her water, which she is continually wanting to rinse [sic] her mouth from the beetel, & which they keep in a silver or gold ewer, & present in a glass, or gold cup. This description will give you an idea of great order delicacy & magnificence; & yet nothing can be more disorderly & offensive than a Zenana; the fine gold, and silver vessels, are so dirty that one cannot distinguish the metal from old lead, & 'tho the forms of them were very elegant & the ornaments in a very good taste, they are beat & bruised with such savage carelessness [sic] that one can scarcely trace out what they have been like. All the servants are so dirty, Oh! So filthy! that no description can give a just idea of them; they smell, of the various oils with which they anoint their hair & bodies, in a most odious manner, & they crowd into the rooms in immense numbers, & with a boldness that cannot be repressed; the lowest & meanest of the slaves obtrude themselves into the apartment of the great Princess, without fear, or shame so that the heat is intolerable. But I think the worst of all is that the great & apparently, delicate ladies themselves, are in their hearts as ferocious as tigers, & capable of shocking, deliberate cruelty. They spend great part of their time in quarreling with each other, & a still greater part in idle childish sports, in which the slaves & all join, sometimes dressing themselves with skins, & running about on all fours, like antelopes tigers &c &c. At other times they dress the anima[ls] in their cloaths [sic], a little time ago, a moorish lady dressed her favourite cat with as many of her finest jewels as she could tie [sic] about it; the cat made its escape from her apartment, & got over the Zenana wall when some lady or other saw it & took care she should return without her finery. The first & highest of the ladies occasionally (8) assist in the business of the house, preparing the fodder, they distinguish themselves from their servants, only by the splen[dour] of their dress; & make them feel their inferiority, by very liberally [sic] bestowing blows & other punishments. The other day when we were at the Bugum's, an order was given to a slave by a very elegant looking lady, whose hands, head & neck were covered with jewels, her dress a white gauze ornamented with gold & a crimson veil forming a drapery about her beautiful figure this lovely looking creature observing that the girl

⁹⁴ Betel (*Piper betle*) is a vine used to wrap areca nut (*Areca catechu*), also called betel nut, which is chewed with slaked lime. The mixture is a mild stimulant widely used in social contexts through Southeast and South Asia.

did not attend to her order, rose up & passing thro' the dirty crowd, siezed [sic] the girl's ear giving it an unmerciful pinch & at the same time thrust her head against the wall in a way that must have caused most excruciating pain and this she did without speaking, or changing her countena[nance] at all, & then sat down & with the utmost composure went on with the conversation; indeed I believe it was a very trifling punishment in comparison of those generally inflicted when they are offended. I saw a slave girl the other day belonging to one of them, who shewed me several large marks on her bosom, which were made by her mistress who being angry with her; walked into the cooking room, & brought out a fire brand, with which she burnt her, these things are practiced even now, & formerly (they say) the mistresses often killed their slaves, for very slight provocations. I thank God there are no slaves amongst the English, our servants are as independent as they are in England, there is no saying how people's hearts grow hard, I am told that the Dutch women, in their settlements, exceed even the moor women in cruelty. If I should relate half the circumstances of this kind that we hear, I should swell my letter to an enormous size, & make it very disgusting, but I thought it right to give you one or two instances, to justify the harsh expressions I used. It is the custom with (9) all the Moors, when a visitor is going away to perfume her handkerchief & cloaths with rose water which is kept in an elegant case of little bottles made entirely of jewels set in gold. Without seeing it one could not form a just notion of the mixture of misery & splendour which in England is called Eastern magnificence, & in which I do assure you no jot of comfort is to be found. The Moor Women have generally speaking, fine regular features & elegant figures but their countenances have an unpleasant expression, an almost horrible fierceness in the look, when they are at all moved. I fear I have taken up too much of your time in trying to describe these women, who are a part of the creation which seems to us to be very useless, to say the best of them; of that however we must not pretend to judge. He knows best who has permitted them to go on in the same way for so many ages, & has heretofore chosen to put so many of creatures in their power. We went to an entertainment at the Nabob's Palace, which was all in the same stile h[e] was dressed very fine with a profusion of jewels & gold & so were the Khans or noblemen who attended him, but the room was dirty & wretched and the walls would have been quite bare but for the industry of the spiders. The servants crouded [sic] in amongst the company in the same ungovernable manner and the men were not more cleanly than the women.

Our friends General & Mrs. Trent leave us by this fleet. I think you & Mrs Clarke will like the lady for her mild, sweet disposition, but as for the General you will think him, rather to be endured than admired, at first, but when you are better acquainted with him, you may see that he has a kind good heart, which he takes some trouble to conceal & like many wiser men

despises the virtues he possesses & wishes only to be admired for qualities (10) not half so valuable; He is born a cockney & 'tho he has been 36 years in this country he retains the w and v together with that agreeable [sic] lisp, which is peculiar to natives of London, he has also a little stammer, yet he says he was born to be an orator that his talents have been misapplied & wishes he had been bred to the bar, he should then have made a distinguished figure in the world. He is kind beyond description to his servants & every creature about him, but when I have sometimes complimented him upon his tenderness towards them, he protests he despises the whole race of Hindoos, thinks them inferior to the brutes & wonders the Judges should befriend such a vile people but a great deal of this arises from the magnificent idea he has of himself & of the English character compared to that of the Hindoo--

My sister joins me in the kindest remembrances to you Mrs Clarke and Charles, & I beg you will forgive the great liberty I have taken with your valuable time and ascribe it to the over zealous esteem & regards of

dear Sir

Your most obliged & obedient

Serv[ant]

M. Symonds

Madras October 14th, 1804

(2) [blank]

Received for Miss Symonds March 26th 1805 to a friend _T.C_. **Letter-052-MS-02-1805**
(Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 248r-252v) **Mary Symonds to Esther Symonds, 2 February 1805**

(1) 1805

(2) Madras Feb^{ry} 2nd 1805

My dear Mother,

I have just heard of an opportunity which now occurs of telling you that we are all in existence [sic] & well; the ship by which I send this is an American, & it is supposed that the Passengers by her may arrive in England two months sooner than those who will go by our regular Fleet, which will sail the end of this month; for that reason Sir Thos Strange has taken his passage in this ship, he having some very urgent business to transact which require his presence in England. What his business is, he & his family keep a profound secret but his sudden departure has put Madras into a general consternation some conjecturing one thing & some another; it must certainly be something [sic] of an extraordinary nature, which could induce a man at near Fifty years of age to risk three Indian voyages particularly as he is within 6 months of having served his seven years, & by going before that term he forfeits (3) his claim to the pension of 16 hundred pounds a year he declares his intention is to return in a year & a half but even that absence is a loss to him of 9 thousand pounds as his houskeeping [sic] goes on here all the same for his brother & sister live with him & one person more or less makes very little difference in a house here.

I shall only write this one letter now as I am obliged to send it by a private hand there being no packet for England by this ship & I shall direct this one immediately to you as I think you are best situated to inform our several friends of the state of our health &c; all my chit chat I shall bestow on Hetty by the regular ships.

Betsy & I are now living at a house called Pommell⁹⁵ situated about eleven miles from Madras, it was built by a Gentleman who was in the Company's civil service; he got a grant of lands, which are very extensive, for the purpose of planting cotton & a kind of Alloe⁹⁶ [sic] which makes very fine strong ropes, with these he expected to supply the Navy the ropes were tried & found to answer very well, but it is said the agents for supplying the navy being people in power & finding that their incomes would be greatly reduced by the loss of that article, they strongly opposed the use of Mr. Webbe's ropes, & he wanting the encouragement of Government finds his speculation turn out very ill & the demand for the ropes so small that he does not think it necessary to reside on the farm The cotton is taken care of by servants whom he

⁹⁵ Pammal, now a suburb of Chennai.

⁹⁶ Probably Agave, then known as "Aloe Americana", the fibre of which is used to make ropes.

keeps here for that purpose. The house he frequently lends to any family of his acquaintanc [sic] who may wish for a change of air or variety of scene. We were very glad to come here for a little time as it is high ground a very pretty picturesque country & at this season, many degrees cooler than Madras. Betsy has been very busily employed in drawing birds & the village people have been very good in bringing many curious ones to her, I assure you I have lost no time but have also been very busy in making drawings of the country & well done or ill done I take care to make them as much like nature as I can by colouring them on the spot, so that I trust in God we shall one day have the pleasue [sic] of giving you & all our friends some idea of this country & its inhabitants when you have our joint labours to aid our desriptions [sic]. We are here surrounded by hills & lakes; & the neighbouring villages, & choultries are situated in beautiful groves, for wherever the natives of this country build they also plant every man makes a screen for his own house to shelter him from the bad winds & to shade him from the noonday sun. It is pretty to see the numbers of little girls who are employed in this cotton ground they run about all day amongst the bushes with little baskets on their arms (4) gathering in the ripe cotton which they carry to others who are sitting down in rows, & with a simple machine made for the purpose, separating the seeds & cleaning the cotton. Sir Henry comes up to us in the cool of the evening & goes down to St Thome in the morning early, he goes every day when he is busy, & when he has leisure he stays with us two or three days together the exercise seems to be of service to him as his appetite is good & he sleeps soundly all night indeed he generally drops asleep by nine oclock & at h[alf] past ten just hobbles to bed with his eyes half shut, we have had a remarkably pleasant season & the weather much cooler during the last two months than I have ever felt it in India, I hope to God it will brace Sir Henry a little & enable him to bear the land winds, as Sir Thos Stranges's [sic] going home will prevent our going away from Madras to avoid the heat; it is indeed very hard upon Sir Henry to be left, I may say, alone, with all the business of the Court upon his hands, for Sir Ben^m Sullivan is an old man & having been a very free liver he is infirm beyond his years he has had two or three alarming illness's [sic] lately & is besides so unused to business that he is quite alarmed at the idea of acting in any thing. (5)

Whilst we are here there are three young men keeping house for themselves at St Thome Mr. Richard as Host & Mr. Biss & a Mr. Tuston his guests. Their business & pleasure prevent their coming to us all the week, but Citizen's like they come up on Saturday night & go down on Sunday evening or Monday morning. Mr. Biss returned from Tripapore⁹⁷ last week where he got great credit for his exertions in the study of the Hindostanee & in his military manoeuvres & in

⁹⁷ Probably an error for Tripasore, the EIC training station for cadets mentioned in Letter 43.

consequence of his good conduct Lord Wm Bentink has fixed him at Madras for one year a member of a society, which he has just formed; to be composed of such young gentlemen only as distinguish themselves at Tripapore they are to be instructed in certain things which Lord Wm thinks necessary to their complete accomplishment as officers, they will be immediately under his own eye, as a house is fitting up for them in the Fort till that is ready Mr. Biss will remain with us.

Long e'er this comes to your hands I hope you will have received our letters by the Glory & the other ships which were to arrive in England in March or April, & We all wrote very fully by them to every body I wrote to Hetty by Genl & Mrs. Trent to introduce them (6) to her as I think they are calculated to make very agreeable companions to each other Mrs. Trent is a most amiable sweet tempered woman & I shall be truly happy to hear of their safe return to dear England.

We received a packet of letters from Hetty about 6 weeks ago by one of the ships of that Fleet in which our new Commander in chief, Sir John Craddock, sailed; that Fleet arrived in the Bay during our monsoon & therefore [sic] they were afraid to put in here & all went to Bengall Hetty mentions some packages for us which are in the care of a friend of Mr Prosser's, in the Baring we know that She is safe in Bengall & so we suppose are the Packages, but the Ships have been detained much longer than was expected owing to an embargo which Lord Wellesley laid on the Ships in consequence of a report of several Privateers having been seen in the Bay, we now hear that it is now taken off & therefore [sic] are in dayly [sic] expectation of the Fleet, & I hope soon after their arrival here we shall have an opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of the things. The expence of land carriage for letters from Bengall is so great that very few have been forwarded to Madras out of those ships so that when they come round I hope we shall receive some more, as we have only had that one packet from Hetty & Sir Henry had a single letter from the Bishop of Ely. I hope you receive all our letters safe & then I think you will have no cause to complain of any thing but the trouble of reading them, to be sure that may be trouble enough to you for neither Betsy or I can boast much of our penmanship, howevr [sic] you can employ the young eyes & I am sure it will be good practice for Tom to accomplish him in the reading of crabbed hands. I have said very little to Hetty about her little Mary because I cannot depend upon the life of any child of hers & it would be shocking to distress her with reading remembrances of it if she should have lost it, this circumstance makes me feel the great distance between [sic] us more than any other. This is a trying season of the year for every one in England & especially for you who I fear are suffering rheumaticks & sad pains, what would I not give at this moment to know how you are perhaps surrounded with snow a yard deep or at best cold &

dirt & slip slop, if you could but give us your summers or we could give you our winters what a rare time we would make of it, we have now fine harvest weather the evenings & mornings very cool & pleasant, but from 9 in the morning till 4 in the evening the heat is too great for women to venture out on foot.

I hope Nancy's little Girl thrives as well as her (7) boys. I long to know who she is like & if she bids fair to be as handsome as her cousin Betsy James, the fame of her beauty spreads far & wide, I enquired of Mr. Biss if she had not yet fixed on a mate & he tells me she had some thoughts of a Purchase of that sort. Pray remember us all very kindly to Mr & Mrs Thos James when you have an opportunity & tell him that I begin to look forward in the hope of having a little flirtation with him again one of these days. Sir Henry will write to some of his friends by this ship but I believe Betsy will leave her part to me as she has now 3 curious birds waiting to be drawn & her conscience is concerned in doing them as soon as possible for the poor things will not eat in confinement so they are let to fly away when they have done sitting for thier [sic] portraits.

She joins me in best love to Ned & Nancy & all the dear little ones, & glad shall we be to hear how you all pass this winter, should this come to your hands sooner than the next Fleet arrives in England you will of course send an account of us to Hetty & with it our kind love to her & James & our thanks for all the trouble she takes in buying & packing &c &c. We both beg you to accept our love & [indistinct?] & pray believe me to be

Your very affectionate daughter Mary Symonds

Madras Feby 2d, 1805

Letter-053-MS-03-1805 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 253r-257v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, 4 March 1805

(1) Madras March the 4th, 1805

My dear Hetty,

We have just received your two boxes by the Baring the one containing a box of milinary [sic] a piece of black cloth & a full dress black coat for Sir Henry. The other filled with peas 2

pair of nankeen shoes⁹⁸ & local [?] news papers Mr. Grimes [?] parcels & 2 pounds of [pur..*word cut off*] the military is a very nice little assortment & very useful to us Betsy is quite glad to see the blue caps & hats, & I am equally so to find a neat plain chip hat for I have neither had hat or bonnet that I could stick on my noddle for a whole year You cannot form an Idea of our stupidity in putting on fancy things & I dare say if after spending an hour in adjusting some dashing hat or cap you were to meet me in it you would burst out laughing to see how completely I had mistaken the matter, besides which I assure you I don't look half so young & blooming as I did ten years ago. The two black Cloaks are very (2) beautiful [sic] we admire both the make & the materials very much. I willingly resign all the caps to Betsy as I shall imitate them, which I can very well do now you have been so good as to send such pretty materials. We have not yet seen the Gentleman who brought the Boxes but he has written once or twice to Sir Henry. I believe he has not been on shore for the Cap,^{tns} & officers of the ship are very much hurried, they were detained a long time at Calcutta & have now a very short time allowed them for lading their ships for the Admiral is quite impatient to sail & indeed every day they are detained now may be the cause of their encountering a storm off the Cape

I wrote to my mother the beginning [sic] of February, by an American vessel in which Sir Thos Strange sailed, to the utter amazement of all his friends & acquaintances, he only gave notice of his going a fortnight before he left this & it is said (indeed he told us himself) that his nearest relations here were totally unacquainted with the occasion of his voyage however be it what it may. I am sure it is very hard on poor Sir Henry to be left here to do the whole business, & when he had promised himself the pleasure of going a little up the country, to avoid the land wind, to be forced to stay here well or ill, & get nothing for his trouble.

I believe Sir Henry was a little disappointed on opening the boxes, not to find a coloured coat, which he promised himself you had sent, he says you mentioned a pepper & salt coat which you had chosen for him a long time ago & now he is obliged to go on in his old long backed fashion tho' (for ought I know) he may have intended to eclipse all the Beaux in this place, I am sure he talks as much of it as if he did. I wish you could be in a corner when we are opening a box from you it would entertain you very much to hear the observations, Sir Henry generally makes himself sport by laughing at all the things as they make their appearance on; the

⁹⁸ Nankeen boots were a fashionable sort of fabric ladies' walking boot in the early nineteenth century. The name is derived from a fabric that was brought from the city of Nankin (Nanjing) in China. (<https://ladysrepositorymuseum.blogspot.com/2013/02/ladys-1810-1820-nankeen-walking-boots.html>)

comparisons & resemblances are beyond any thing. Betsy has fallen violently in love with a blue quilted bonnet & he declares it is a twin of his Aunt Hollands old petticoat. A little time ago Betsy had been drawing a small kind of tiger & after she had done it she told Sir Henry that she discovered a great resemblance in the tigers countenance to mine, she did not communicate the idea to me; & the next day I made my appearance in a kind of military waistcoat with loops of bobbin crossing the breast from button to button; as soon as I sat down he began to titter, & then gave Betsy a jog to look at me; Betsy says he, look at old Tiger Pol she has dressed herself in the skeleton of a man she killed yesterday. When Mr. Biss arrived he was quizzed & laughed at by us all he was the first very short (3) waisted gentleman we had seen, Sir Henry used to sit laughing & making fun with him by the hour, his little waistcoat his large sleeves & boots & his high collar & stuffed cavat [sic], but I assure you he has undergone an entire metamorphosis & is now quite reduced to a neat Indian Officer, & in his turn laughs at the Griff⁹⁹ that are just arrived. The young men generally begin reducing their neckcloths which they [illegible] & pose [?] dayly like skinning an onion & then those fine high collars & long sleeves [sic] are such a charming addition to a good crop of prickly heat, that they gladly exchange them in the house for a [sic] white cotton sleeve waistcoat, & comfort becomes of so much value that even the dashing appearance is forced to yield to it in a very little time.

The paper you sent is very acceptable to Betsy as she has had a drawing fit lately & nearly used up all the old stock: for my own part I am trying to buy a little but it is wretched stuff that is brought out to sell in general & all snatched up immediately. We have been this cool season at a place called Pommel¹⁰⁰ about 12 miles from Madras the country about it is extremely pretty & I have made myself very busy sketching, so you may (4) now tell George Samuel in answer to his enquiries, that I have got Pagodas & Coultries & Montathums¹⁰¹ & Mosques & Mousoleums [sic], but alas: no paper for landscape; what we brought out with us has entirely lost the size & sinks worse than blot paper I wished to give you an idea of our house at St. Thome but no paper, however I was so determined to do it that I have taken a bit of the new letter paper by way of an experiment it does not answer well at all; but I enclose it much as it is, & you must take it in lieu of a sheet of writing; for it was a sudden thought & we have very little time allowed for proposing our letters. Betsy thinks it was very stingy to send only 12 sheets of

⁹⁹ Griff or griffen, as noted above, one newly arrived in India.

¹⁰⁰ Pammal, as above.

¹⁰¹ Mountains or mounts. From the Latin.

the thick paper, so you can be so good as to double that quantity; & send with it about the same, of such as will suit for slighter drawings; that thick sort is only proper for very high finishing.

We sent you many trifles [sic] in the Prince of Wales & most of our letters were also put in the packet by her (as she was a favourite ship) in consequence of which I fear you will again think we have (5) not written to you as fully as we might, for now all hope of her ever arriving is given up & it is pretty certain that she must have sunk with every soul on board, you mention, with some regret, that Sir Henry had written to his father & that Betsy and I had omitted to avail ourselves of the same opportunity, but I assure you it was no fault of ours for I have never neglected one chance of sending, since I came into the country, but it has happened that Sir Henry, having particular business to write upon, has once or twice sent a letter to Bengall or Bombay to take the chances of a ship sailing from one of those places to any port of Europe & the letter you allude to, has fortunately been forwarded immediately. That way of sending is so uncertain & attended with so much difficulty & obligation that we would never do it except on a very pressing occasion. Since Mr. Biss's arrival we have twice had the pleasure of hearing from you, but from you alone not a line from either of the Thoburns or any of our particular friends. I think it is just a year sinc [sic] the date of thier [sic] last letters, but perhaps we may have been so unlucky as to lose some for these last ships have arrived so irregularly The Baring and Airly Castle & all the ships of that Fleet which was destined to this place were afraid to put in here on account of the monsoon as they were in the Bay just at the commencement of it & therfore they went to Bengall first; some of the letters were forwarded to us by the Post, & others were kept till they came round here which must have made some confusion you are very good in mentioning every one who is dear to us, as by doing so you prevent our being unhappy in case we are deprived of thier [sic] letters by any accident Our good Old Admiral¹⁰² will convoy this fleet home all the way, so we have a fair prospect of your recieving [sic] our letters in reasonable time, his Successor has not yet been on shore here, so I know nothing of him, but as he is a young & active man I hope we shall be more fortunate in these seas than we have been. Madras has been for those three weeks all shew & finery, quite full of fine folks & gay folks at least as far as outside goes, but I believe with many that is all. The Civilians gave a dinner & the Navy agent a Grand ball & fire works, to Admiral Rainier prior to his departure & the Civilians gave a very Grand ball & the Military a very fine dinner (6) to General Wellesley prior to his departure Lady William Bentink has given evenings parties to introduce Sir John & Lady Theodoria Craddock.¹⁰³ I took the trouble of going

¹⁰² Admiral Peter Rainier, as above.

¹⁰³ Sir John Craddock (1759-1839), Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army.

to two of the balls in order to oblige Mr. Biss & Mr. Richard Clarke, but I am by no means fond of such hurly burly, for it is all the same thing over & over again, & all the same people for the most part of the year, just now to be sure, we have plenty of new faces to stare at & new fashions to laugh at all the people who are come out by 4 or 5 ships from England, some for this place & some for Bengal & going home, & all those who have been there these two months by the other fleet & are but just brought round.

I am writing a poor stupid kind of a letter but it will serve to shew you wat we are about Mr. Biss has been with us this month, since his return from Tripapore,¹⁰⁴ he is this day gone to his new employment under Captn Troyer.¹⁰⁵ God knows what he is to learn there, but a variety of things in which Ld William thinks it necessary to accomplish a chosen few, at present they are only 14 & are selected from all the Cadets (7) of the last year; it will be a great pleasure for Mr. Biss's friends to find him amongst the number as it is so great a proof of his merit in his profession, he is indeed a very fine young man & a great favourite with us all. I believe like evry [sic] other young man who comes out, he does not find India all he expected, though he really does not complain as every one else does; In England, they hear a great deal of the fine pay of officers here, but nothing of the sad impositions they are obliged to submit to, the very great expence they are at in fitting themselves out with various necessities, which are unheard of in England, & the many hardships they are forced to undergo on their first arrival. When once their establishment is fixed the pay is certainly sufficient to maintain them very genteely but it is impossible for any young man to join his Regiment without considerable assistance from his friends. This is a circumstance very little known in England but very severely felt by all the houskeepers [sic] here, who have numbers of poor young men recommended to them & whose friends think they have provided for them by giving them a good stock of Cloaths & paying their passage.

Sir Thos Strange told me he had two or three (8) thousand pagodas owing to him not one of which could ever be paid, for the young mens friends would not remit the money & he could not find in his heart to ask them for it, knowing it was not in thier [sic] power to pay it without contracting debts to natives, who would charge them an immoderate interest, & keep them in thralldom for many many years. You write us very surprising news of your being at Clapham. I begin to think you have an eye towards the mansion house, pray have you the Honour &

¹⁰⁴ Probably Tripasore, as above.

¹⁰⁵ Captain Troyer was in charge of training the surveying officers at the Madras Military Institution. (Clements R Markham, *A Memoir on the Indian Surveys* (London: Sold by W.H. Allen, 1871), 58.)

pleasure of Mrs Raven-hills¹⁰⁶ acquaintance or is she quite too sublime?. I suppose you give yourself little care whose acquaintance you have whilst you have your dear little pratler [sic] with you I think she must begin to prattle now. I wish I could hear of her & you once a week for now I don't like to think much about her nor to promise myself pleasure which is at least so very distant.

God bless & keep you all. I shall write to as many friends as I can, but I make up your dispatches first, as We consider yours as head quarters. Give a thousand kisses to my dear little namesake for me & my kind love to James & all my dear friends and believe me

ever most affectionately yours

M. Symonds

Madras March (.) 4th 1805

Letter-058-MS-09-1805 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 297r-298v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, 9 September 1805

(1) Madras Sepr 9th, 1805

My dear Hetty

Sir Henry intended writing to you by Mr. Keene but I believe he has not time, he is so much hurried Just at the last; he has desired me to write a few lines by way of introduction, which is all that is necessary as we have all mentioned him in our letters repeatedly. I need not make a parade of asking you to pay him attention because from what has been said of him in our letters by the packet I know you will not be wanting in that way, but least he should be so zealous as to deliver this before you recieve [sic] the letters by the packets, I shall just say he is

a friend & great favourite of Sir Henrys he admires him as much for his great good service as we do & as we hope you will do, for his good nature.

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Mrs Jane Ravenhill (d. 1847, Clapham), wife of the banker John Ravenhill.

I have just recollected one thing we are in great want of, which is some more of the Wedgwood breakfast Cups, both Tea & Coffee cups; pray have the goodness to send them by the first opportunity 2 dozen Teacups **(2)** & one dozen Coffee cups with Saucers & two Teapots to match I will sketch the pattern.

Yours ever affectionately
M Symonds

[Drawing of a branch with leaves and berries/flowers, most likely the pattern design for the cup sets mentioned above]

(3) M^{rs}. James

No 39 Bishopsgate Street Within
London

Forward by M^r. Keene

Letter-061-MS-01-1806 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 304r-309r), Mary Symonds to Hester James, 28 January 1806

(1) 1806

1 [Family tree of descendants from Hester James (Hetty leading to Richard Blunt (born in 1903))]

2 Madras January the 28th, 1806
My Dear Hetty,

I think I never began to write to you so unwillingly as at this time for the Ships from England have been hourly expected for this month & we now expect fully that the Fleet from this place will sail before thier [sic] arrival, The letters we wrote to you in Sept^r I trust you have receivd [sic] about this time whilst there you must have written to us as early as May, are not yet come to hand. As our land dispatch arrived yesterday [sic] giving an account of the sailing of the fleet accompanied by several men of war & a great many troops, &c, for taking the Cape it is therefore probable they will not be here for some weeks. The same despatch [sic] brings an account of the death of the Duke of Glouster [sic]. I suppose it must be much felt by the good old king as he now stands quite alone the last tho' the eldest of his brothers, he is an example of the benefits arising from temperance & by his private virtue [sic], he becomes a publick blessing.

I have the happiness to tell you that we are all in good health Betsy never was better in her life. & Sir Henry as if it were to make amends for the fatigue & trouble he has had, being abandoned by his colleagues, has enjoyed (4) a year & upwards of uninterrupted health which prove that anxiety & the fatigue of business do not affect his constitution. Sir Benjamin Sullivan is not yet returned he writes to Sir Henry that if his presence be absolutely necessary he will come at any rate but that his health is still very bad, he is now in Calcutta, he has been absent from Madras eight months, poor man he has probably prolonged his life by going away as it was generally believed he would not have lived here, but surely there is nothing to be said for Sir Thos Strange who has left his duty to serve his interest only. We are now at Pommel¹⁰⁷ the Cotton farm which we wrote from this time last year the weather is very cool & pleasant, & Sir Henry goes down to St Thome every morning to his business & returns to sleep at night he thinks the exercise does him good & the distance is not more than ten miles; the house at St Thome is being repaired & beautified in our absence & we are very glad to be out of the smell of paint. Mr. Biss is now stationed about 4 miles distant from this place & (I suppose) for the first time in his life living in his Tent he seems much pleased with it & is in remarkably good health. he has a companion at present a Mr. Walpole who is a very elegant young man, sweet tempered & remarkably handsome he is of Lord Orford's family & son to the publick minister at Lisbon.¹⁰⁸ They both spent [sic] their Sunday with us & have no doubt but Mr. Biss will give you a [particular?] account of himself & his employment, as you seem to be a prodigious favourite of his. The twelve young men who form the Institution of which Mr. Biss is a member are stationed at certain distances to make an accurate survey of this part of the county & I believe they are to

¹⁰⁷ Pammal.

¹⁰⁸ George Walpole, d. 1807.

survey the whole of the [Carnatic?] & when the plans are completed the Governor says he intends to send them home to the Court of Directors as a proof of the utility of his Institution & of the particular merit of its present members Biss does himself credit wherever he is, by his industry & the gentleness of his disposition, his friends have nothing to apprehend for him but the delicacy [sic] of his constitution, which however I hope will become stronger as he grows older. I do not think the climate disagrees with him at all, but on the contrary that he is rather better since he came to this country than at his arrival, but he is of an extremely nervous habit. I write pretty particularly about him because I know, besides having a good deal to do, young men in general are not very fond of writing particulars about themselves which such good mothers, as his appears to be would be much gratified by hearing. I hope when these ships do come they will bring the long looked for, & longed for, Saddle &c, and also the remaining part of (5) Richard Clarke's things. I wish much to know how Mr. Livingstone happened to leave them behind as he said they were not come to Portsmouth when he sailed & yet he mentioned the name of the ship by which they were to be forwarded, but I have told you all this before & I hope you have read it & seen our good kind hearted friend Mr. Keene I shall be truly glad to hear of his safe arrival & of the restoration of his health. I have not received a line from my kind friend Mrs. Trent. I long to know how you go on together how you like them & how they like you I am sure they must be much altered if you are not good friends. I have written a budget [sic] of tittle tattle to Mrs. Trent which she will read if she has leisure & a good stock of patience. We have continued to get through the greatest part of your excellent eatables they were all extremely fine except the tongues which you know you only sent as an experiment, I am housewifing the pickles to make them last out the year but they are in great request, the sweetmeats are nearly disposed of poor Biss I am happy to say has shared all happening fortunately to be near us & Sir Henry never omits asking him when we have a party, he calls him (6) his Aid du Camp [sic], & makes him sit at one end of the table when we have huge parties & Richard at the other, they are Sir Henry's staff, as he calls them. They are great friends & both very much liked. Richard, is indeed more generally beloved than any man in the country I believe; the sweetness of his temper & extreme modesty of his manners prevent his offending any one, & the fineness of his principles [sic] & elegance of those accomplishments which his fathers excellent education has bestowed upon him are qualifications so rarely met with here that they cannot fail to distinguish this possessor, so much for my favourites, but they have led me astray from the subject I was upon, which is giving you some account of your good things & the manner in which we have disposed of them, the hams were all eaten up to the bone & were all excellent. The sweet meats both yours & Maam's [?] were far the best that have ever arrived; tomorrow is Sunday & I intend to treat my friends

with some raspberry tarts, but as the stock is getting low I am rather stingy, however I am proud to (7) say that my minced pies have been prodigiously admired this year real orthodox minced pies, I now & then send half a dozn to the Tents & am sure to be told they came very opportunely or were truly acceptable or some such answer as proves my labour is not thrown away. Monday. We had the party as I expected yesterday. & all vastly gay with the jam & some fine fat Ducks & two handsome [sic] dishes of green peas, there we beat you I think on the second day of February. We take care to keep the English season too for as it was Candlemass day which Sir Henry calls the last day of Christmass, we had a large Norfolk Turkey & some mince pies.--I think I am writing you a pretty nonsensical [sic] letter but it is necessary you should have a familiar peek at us now & then & I know no one else will spend ink & paper on such subjects. Our party consisted of our own family, only with the addition of Mr. Biss Mr. Walpole & a Mr. Dalgaines [?] of thier [sic] society- whose Tent is pitched about 4 miles to the Westward of us.

Having thanked you in the name of the whole family for your kind attention to our internals & externals, I shall proceed [sic] to make some further trial of our friendship by requesting you to execute more commissions for us, one of which of a new & rather extraordinary nature you will find enclosed on a separate piece of paper. By some opportunity or other I requested [sic] you to send two plates of looking glass to repair the accidents which had befallen two dressing tables but as you have never noticed the request I suspect the letter must have miscarried. I have not the proper dimensions [sic] here but will endeavour to get them before I send that off. You will be so good as to omit no opportunity [sic] of sending drawing paper of all sorts, for Betsy has acquired such a facility in drawing the birds, & is so anxious to go on with her collection that I can scarcely be allowed a bit of good paper to practice on least the stock should be exhausted before a fresh supply comes to hand. We are also in want of the following colours & c. Viz Lake, Prussian [sic] Blue, Indigo, Light red, Burnt Umber & Gaul stone, 2 Cakes each, 4 or 5 dozn of black lead pencils & as many Brushes of all sizes. Pens & writing paper with sand, coloured wafers & c, as you kindly sent them before will always be truly acceptable, two good pen knives & 2 or 3 pair of scizors [sic], a few needles some tape bobbin & balls [?] both silk & cotton, there is a soft sort (8) of cotton lace platted, which is better here than the silk which turns very yellow & grows rotten. Pray send a few pairs of gloves for Sir Henry & a few bits of Watch ribbons of cheerful patterns but not over gay. If you are a little more liberal to us in shoes it will be no harm, & be so good as to send mine a very little smaller than the last if you send Betsy & me half a dozn pairs of good silk stockings each, I think they

will be very acceptable by the time you can answer this. The thick green shoes you sent are very useful & comfortable during the cool weather they are on our feet at this moment mine are almost past service. Do not trouble yourself to send many varieties of confectionary articles, as the Scotch Caraways, the Toloo Lozenges,¹⁰⁹ the Candied Almonds & Orange chips were the only things much esteemed I am sorry to say the Almonds have hitherto been rather unfortunate for being packed in paper only, they have never been dry enough to bring to table. Store jars well corked & rezined [sic] are I think the best things to put them in. Betsy has some trifles which she would be very glad to send home to you but I fear we shall get no one to carry them by this opportunity, Mr. Prossers ship has not returned here it was reported she had sailed from Bengal directly to England, but I have no certain information about her. I do not think I shall write to the Thoburns this time If I do not pray assure them that is not for want of good will & real affection for them but because I have written to (9) them since I heard from them & have really nothing to say that I think would in the least degree amuse them, I have to apologize to them however for a great rudeness I was guilty of in thanking them for a hat which they did not send me I made a confusion in reading the letters as we were very much hurrid [sic] by the sudden departure of one fleet immediately on the arrival of another, I afterwards saw it was the feathers they had sent, for which they were however equally entitled to my thanks. I hope we shall be able to send some seeds but are by no means certain as I do not know any of the passengers by these ships & hear there are very few persons going home from this Presidency.

I suppose my continuing to subscribe myself by the same name, will make you think your kind admonitions (if I may so call them) thrown away, that I assure you is not the case, neither am I by any means indifferent about the subject of them, but I cannot help thinking it better to abide by an evil I do know, then by attempting to avoid it to throw myself into one I do not know the worst of, it is nothing new to say that a dependent state is not a very happy one, but I could never think myself independent in being the wife of a man whose conduct my heart could not approve. It has pleased God to give me health & such other requisites as in my present state, will enable me to make myself (10) independent at any time I shall find it necessary to exert them. God forbid them that from petulence [sic] or intemperance I should put it out of my power to use those good gifts. No, I shall wait patiently & remain ever as I am, unless that happens, which however may happen, that I meet with a man in whom I find those qualities which I think necessary to my happiness, & though amongst my numerous admirers in this country I have not

¹⁰⁹ Tolu lozenges were made from tolu balsam, which is tapped from the living trunks of *Myroxylon balsamum*, a tree native to South America.

yet met with such an one, I think I cannot be accused of making any unreasonable demands. If I were some ten or twelve years younger it is probable I should have married long ago for I know several young men who would be most happy to take me such as I am, to whom no reasonable woman of eighteen or twenty could object, but as they are men twenty two, to twenty five or six years old, I should think myself guilty of an unpardonable rashness in doing them the injury to accept them & should deserve all the ill consequences which might naturally follow such a step, perhaps you will think I make too much of this subject & tire you, but yet I could say more if you & I were together in a corner but the distance, & the uncertainty of the fate of letters must withhold [sic] my confidence till we meet when, if it ever shall please God to grant me that happiness, there shall be no secret between us at least there shall be no reserve on my part, you will observe by the different [dates?] that I have written this is a strange tedious way, which has been occasioned by the different accounts I hear of the time the ships are intended to sail & by the hope of hearing from you before I finish it, I shall however close it now & if the time admits I will write again to you. The supply of wearables you send us out every years [sic] is really very handsome & must give you a great deal of trouble to collect, but my dear Hetty I should like very much to know what the expense of them is, you have never sent any amount yet; besides the pleasure of knowing how much I cost my friends, I should like to know the price of articles as I am often asked for the sake of comparing mine with those bought here, you could perhaps send me the sum total of each year, & if it is not too much trouble, when you are packing will you be so good as to pin a bit of paper on each with the price of it.

I believe I told you Mr. Prosser had brought Betsy & me each a very Pretty cap, & Sir Henry a hamper of most excellent Cider, I scarcely ever saw him enjoy any thing equal to it he has had his glass out of every bottle that has been opened; it is the only thing I ever knew him keep for himself or use so economically Mr Biss desires me to say all manner of kind things to you from him, he has been here in his way to Combatore,¹¹⁰ Where **(11)** Captain Troyer has appointed him to meet on business. Mr. B-- desires me to tell you that he is vexed & disappointed at being prevented from writing to you, which he fully intended doing, but as Captain Troyer wishes to take him with him on a survey he fears he must be at a considerable distance from Madras & his time will be fully occupied till the Ships sail he sends home a thick packet of newspapers for his father & begs you will have the goodness to forward them I am in great hope that we shall have another opportunity of writing in April. Mr. Waite's brother is with us he is going home as he says for his health but I suppose he is persuaded to go, as I do not see

¹¹⁰ Coimbatore.

any difference in his appearance now & when he came out or at least if any it is for the better, but as the poor creature has no marked fault to lay hold on, for which they could get him out of the army I suppose a Commander in chief must be very glad to find he can make him think himself ill enough to go home, for what could they do with such a poor Gent? it would be impossible to give him a command or indeed any employment, I have given him two small packets of pretty red seeds, one for you & one for [Mr. Keene?]. We think you can get them drilled by Miss Fraser & they will make pretty necklaces. Sir Henry & Mr. Oliver have received [sic] letters from Mr. Keene which give us great pleasure, as they tell us he is greatly recovered [sic] pray remember me kindly to him & tell him I have not forgot my promise of the Brahminny women & c but must keep them till the next opportunity. If you see or hear any thing of Captain Templer I beg you to say every thing **(12)** that is handsome to him from me, & tell him I shall trouble him with a few lines, whenever I hear from him that he is in some settled place where my letters may be more fortunate in reaching him, as I have written round, but conclude he has not received [sic] them ----- You will no doubt think it strange that I should write this long letter without once mentioning my dear little niece, believe me it is not because she is out of my thoughts but because she is too much in them may God bless & preserve her prays her most affectionate aunt Mary. This season of the year reminds me always of our little excursion [sic] to Brompton when we used to open our eyes after a gloomy Winter to look for some kind bud or blossom to cheer us with the promise of fairer days. When will such happy tranquil days return to us all? They are at least far off, but the hopes that such may again be enjoyed, & that we shall find no diminution in that warm affection which was the real cause of their happiness, is the prospect which enlivens all my present hours, shortens the time of our separation & smoothes all the rugged roads of this [___?] life. May God bless you & may evry [sic]? happiness attend you, & all those dear friends whose sincerity & virtue having been tried & proved, thier [sic] value rises dayly [sic] & hourly in our estimation, I beg you to give my kind love to Ned, Nancy & all thier [sic] dear little ones, & with my duty to my dear Mother & remembrances to all who are so good as to enquire for us, I request that you & James will believe me your very truly affectionate Sister

M. Symonds

Madras Feby 11, 1806

Letter-064-MS-02-1806 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 319r-321v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, 12 February 1806

(1) Madras Feby 12: 1806

Dear Hetty,

When I arose this morning I heard a salute fired, which (being 12 miles off) I concluded was from the Ships that were getting under weigh to sail for England, but to our great delight & surprise about two hours ago Sir Henry sent up a messenger with a packet of letters from you. I know not what good ship has brought them, so he knowing our anxiety did not stay to write very particulars My comfort be the same we have so long expected but must have come by some ship which has been despatched since as they are dated Sepr 1805. I now regret having written such dull stuff as I fear will tire you more to read than it did me to write. Thank God to hear you are all well. I seem another creature, & I am sure my eyes are an inch wider open than they have been this month. You mention a great many letters which have been written to us not one of which we have yet recieved [sic] but I trust all will come in time. (2) we expect Sir Henry every minute & he will perhaps bring in some news. What is now come to our hands is a letter [opium?] for Betsy & me from your dear self with a packet containing two wigs & severall [sic] loose letters from Mr. Biss's friends Mr. Whitley & c. I begin to write all this uncertain about [?] because I do not know that I may have time after Sir Henry comes up as he sent us word that the ships which were to sail today, would be delayed till 12 oclock tomorrow only, & it is now nine at night. I am very glad you recieved [sic] my letters with the drawing of the House & that my dear James liked it pray tell him I will not let another opportunity pass without sending him views of all the houses we have inhabitted [sic] in India, & such other things as I think will amuse him, but I am so anxious to work for improvement only that I take no care of the things I do. I have sent George Samuel two or three little scraps with a request that he will give me a little instruction. You complain that I have not given a view of the Sea with the house now my dear Hetty, if you just recollect, I have told you that we see the Sea from the House & therefore [sic] to draw the house I must necessarily turn that end towards the Sea which could not conveniently describe it, but you shall have it in all directions fore & aft. Poor Sir Henry too he has not acknowledged the books I wonder of that too but to say the truth he has little time for

reading them. Mr. Cobbet¹¹¹ lies on the table by me now. Sir H-- carries them about with him but poor soul he has so little leisure, he reads when he can, but it is not often, this is a wretched country in many respects here are no comfortable places to go to. Nothing like Poplar Walk in the whole country, & then yet 15 thousand miles & 5 months voyage, blunt the edge of a mans political appetite considerably, particularly with such a charming government & such curious politicks as he has to consider & contemplate here, he has not been able to come up to us every night lately as he used to do but stays down at St. Thome for 3 or 4 nights at a time during the Sessions & [Trials?] time which latter is now, & he has not been with us these three nights, when he does come it is about nine or ten o'clock quite tired & he generally takes up a book after telling us the news, sits down on a couch & falls asleep in half an hour, with some difficulty we make him sensible to go to bed, & he awakes at five in the morning & sets off again to business (3) I guess this will plead his excuse to James but I have no doubt but he will give an account of himself, it is not want of inclination to read but want of leisure, & as I told you want of those conveniences which in a country of luxuries you enjoy it is impossible for me to give you an account of the poverty of the land in these respects or rather the riches of the land speaking as a native Hindoo--but if you ask my good friend Mrs. Trent she will tell you all the particulars of the Inconveniences of this uncivilized place. I am glad you see a good deal of my friend the General I thought it would be strange if you were not friends. I have not written to him because I was so sadly in the dumps but I shall by the next opportunity [sic] you delight me by telling me that John Gwillim says he has written to me for though I have never seen a line of him it is a sufficient satisfaction to me if he thinks he ought to have written to me & sometimes remembers me, my heart is many a pound the lighter for hearing it, & it would have saved me many a tear to have heard it before which I could not help dropping to the memory of an old & dear (& as I thought) lost friendship. I shall write to him (4) again in consequence of the information. The account you give of Ned & Nancy is very grateful to me I hope with my whole heart that they will do well the [mischief?] of a low & evil spirit, especially a sordid one will I think never be permitted to do them harm, let them but do right & remember the words of the Psalmist. "I have been young & am old yet I hath ["not" missing] seen the righteous man forsaken or his seed begging their bread." The truth of which I am fully convinced of. The fault you find in Tom James education is a very generall [sic] one. I know not how it is whether the masters really pay too much attention to the dead languages & too little to our own, or that they think only of receving [sic] their money & neglecting their duty altogether but certainly the young men of

¹¹¹ In reference to the works of William Cobbett, perhaps the *Weekly Political Register*.

whom I see great numbers are extremely deficient in the English language I have known but few who were otherwise & those were young men of high families & educated of Publick Schools. Sir Henry is come up he says the packet has closed, however I shall close this & let him take it down in the morning, for the chance of a private hand, So God bless (5) you all once more. I have recived [sic] nothing more Sir H-- says he had a great many letters for Biss but only one & on business to himself. The Ships which brought them are the Albion & Diana. The fleet which, I suppose, brings all the letters you mention, will not be here yet, but I hope we shall have another chance of writing soon & then you shall all hear of us again & in good spirits now I know you are all well & happy

Yours most affectionately

M Symonds

do not send this to Mr. Gwillim [&?] James

**Letter-066-MS-07-1806 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 324r-325v) Mary Symonds to her Hester James,
28 July 1806**

(1) Madras July 28th 1806

My dear Hetty

As you will see by the publick papers an account of the shocking mutiny which has taken place at Vellore,¹¹² I write a few lines by this uncertain opportunity just to satisfy your mind as to our safety; I thank God we are all well, & we have every reason to think ourselves safe, the disturbance was occasioned by an order being issued which directed an alteration in the dress of the Indian army & interfered with some of the harmless prejudices of these poor people. I cannot write you any particulars having only half an hour allowed me to prepare & read this, the ship which carries it is an American going to New York.

¹¹² The Vellore Mutiny or Uprising of 10 July 1806.

On the 27th of June we received your letters by the fleet which left England the first week in March they brought us the sad unwelcome news of our dear dear Mothers death You have indeed a loss in her, her sweet consoling tenderness her sensible good advice & her innocent & vituous [sic] example you will miss, I pray to God to protect you I have wished to be with you that I might endeavour to supply her loss to you in some degree by comforting & assisting you as (2) as well as I could, poor Nancy too & her dear children have lost a friend, & adviser for ourselves she has been sadly [?] lost to us when I took me leave of her before I came to this country. I considered it as a last separation, & have scarcely suffered myself to hope for the happiness of seeing her again ever since I have been here or if such a wish has for a moment entered my mind it has been immediately checked by the recollection that I could only at the utmost hope to see her in a declining state & to perform the last sad duties. We will write fully to you on this & every other subject soon. We have not recived [sic] any packages by those ships except a box containing some sweetmeats from Mrs. Whitley & a basket of seeds they were under the care of a Mrs Lee & came very safe & good, ships from England are hourly expected here & in them I suppose we shall find packages from you they will also bring us a new Governor & Governor General & we expect an entire change of men & measures which is much to be desired, for weaker or worse than the present can hardly be. god almighty bless you & send us a happy meeting at the expiration of our time of penance in this place; I think you need not fear its being prolonged. I have so many things to say to you that I know not how to quit my pen, but it must be. Remember to present our most affectionate regards to all our dear kind friends & my best love to you dear lovely girl.

Your ever affectionate sister

M. Symonds

The order which occasioned the disturbance has been withdrawn & a contrary one published we will send you copies of both with all particulars by the regular ships

(3) Received April 7th

1807 M^{rs}. James

No 39. Bishopsgate Street
London

[?] Sarah Christiana

1st Oct^r. 1806

**Letter-067-MS-09-1806 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 326r-n.f.) Mary Symonds to Hester James, 30
September 1806**

(1) Madras Sepr 30th 1806

My dearest Hetty

I wrote a short hasty letter to you in the hope of sending it by an American ship & I sent my letter to Sir Edward Pellew who had promised to forward it with his own letters, unfortunately the ship did not touch here, & by some accident or other my letter was mislaid in his office till yesterday when he sent it me, & the first news I hear this morning is that the Sarah Christiana is arrived here from Bengall & will sail again tomorrow. This ship, we heard some time ago was to touch here but she has been so long on her passage & there are so many privateers in the Bay that we began to think she was either taken or that she would sail from Bengall direct, she is going home with despatches, I believe entirely on account of the sad mutiny at Vellore, I fear the French papers will give a dreadful account of that lamentable business & that you will be apprehensive for the safety of us all

Thank God the evil has not extended beyond Vellore but attempts have been made at other places & a general massacre of the English was intended & certainly would have been attempted had the orders of the Commander in Chief been enforced, they have however been withdrawn (2) & I am sorry to say others are now publishing allmost [sic] as dangerous, from running into the contrary extreme our blessed Governor is now contrary to all advice making concessions to the natives which never were thought of before & which will of course convince them that they have only to oppose whatever they dislike, in order to obtain its opposite. Betsy

has written you a very long letter she prepared it in order that she might not be taken by surprise or miss any chance that might occur knowing that you would be most particularly anxious to receive answers to your last letters & to those you wrote in the End of February giving us the melancholy account of the death of my deare [sic] kind, good, mother. Those letters we received on the 27th of June. The ships came in on the 26th & Richard Clarke went into the Fort very early in the morning of the 27th in order to procure our letters, & I waited anxiously for them & wondered much he did not send them so soon as usual at last Sir Henry came into my room, & went out again two or three times without saying a word & I then began to think there was something amiss, I questioned him & he told me he had no letters but Richard had written him word that there was some ill news for us & it had been mentioned by Genl Trent, I instantly summoned each dear loved friend to my recollection thought over & over which I should endure to find myself separated from for ever, but could not determine & at last was become so anxious & miserable in suspence [sic] that even the afflicting news I heard was a relief, being a certainty. The next trouble was to break it to poor Betsy which Sir Henry did by shewing her his fathers letter in which the sad event was not mentioned, but he said he had serious apprehensions from the nature of her disorder, Sir Henry tried to pacify her by assuring her that he had no further letter on the subject, & we all sat down together, but seeing me more depressed than herself she guessed the truth, & after endeavouring to reconcile her to the event by such arguments as the case admitted of, we acknowledged the truth. she was of course very much affected by it for a time but I am happy to say she has not suffered from it as much as I feared she would indeed I know not how it is but it seems to me by no means so great an affliction as I ever thought it would be, when formerly I have considered such a separation as a naturall [sic] probable event, but God never sends afflictions without comfort, for those who are inclined to receive it & surely in this instance he has not forgotten his creatures; for what a blessed example has he given us in the life & death of this faithful servant of his? & how has he rewarded the cares of the one by the peaceful Tranquility of of [sic] the other? Happy in her children, surrounded by [_____] friends, & contributing to the happiness, the health & the prosperity of those she loved, almost to the last hour of her virtuous life. Separated as we have been from her & unaccustomed to hear her voice or see her face & watch the regular change which time (3) must have made in her. I think of her continually as I left her & except when I am writing on the subject or called upon by some particular train of thought. I forget that she is gone from us & sometimes catch myself thinking what will be her opinion when she hears of this of that occurence [sic]; but I have really no melancholy thoughts on the subject on the contrary my spirit & my soul rejoices in the thought & in the hope that my last hour may resemble hers, & though my trials may differ in their nature

that I may bear them after her example of patience & resignation. My first wish is to act in such a way as she would approve of, supposing she could overlook every part of my conduct. Her little property, that is, my portion of it I wish to bestow in the way I think she would have been pleased to have seen it disposed of I will not now say how because I fear I am not at present at liberty to dispose of it at all. Sir Henry wished me to accept of Betsy's part, but God forbid that even a farthing of it should be expended for my use how dreadful would be my feelings if I thought it possible that I should ever be forced to diminish instead of increasing that little store for the purposes I wish it destined to, how should I reproach myself for a wretched ill spent youth. I have declined his offer but have given him no positive reason for it (4) perhaps however he may guess what my objections are he tells me that though I do not accept of it yet he wishes it to be in my name in order to save trouble & expence to that of course I cannot object, but as I do not understand business of this nature I cannot explain to you what the difficulties are which are to be obviated by this union, but I conclude Sir H-- will write his opinion to Mr. James & direct what he wishes to have done my most earnest desire now is to find myself in such a situation as shall enable me to do what my heart & conscience direct me to. I shall not trouble you further on this subject untill [sic] I can speak with direction upon it. By the regular ships which I expect will sail in a fortnight after this I will certainly write to my dear Ned, & Tom & to all my kind friends whose correspondence is the greatest pleasure I have in the world. I have made you a small copy of our dear Mothers picture & intend to send it by the next ships. I shall also copy it for Ned & Nancy, as soon as I can, but I fear I shall not have theirs ready for the same opportunity. I am just told that this ship is to be despatched some hours sooner than I expected & I must therefore [sic] close this immediately although my head & heart are full of the subject. [word erased] I have written upon, It is not however very material as another opportunity will certainly occur very soon.

[*Sir* - piece missing] Henry desires me to say that Mr. Gwatkin (5) will pay a hundred pounds into Mr. James's hands on his account. I have three people standing by me & hurrying me to conclude so I can say no more, but request you to make my kindest remembrances to every dear friend & assure them I will write to each & every one of them by the regular ship, this is a very uncertain opportunity & the ship though a remarkably good sailer is very likely to be taken

God bless & preserve you & my dear James, give my best love to the Thoburns & tell them I have recived [sic] thier [sic] kind present of gloves.

Your most affectionately

M. Symonds.

(6) letter received in 1807

M^{rs}. James

Bishopsgate Street, within

London

Please to read this & keep it

for M^{rs} James do not send it

to M^r G_ but send it as

soon as you can to Westm_

**Letter-070-MS-11-1806 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 346r-352v) Mary Symonds to Hester James, n.d.
[November 1806?]**

(1) [in pencil: No Date Nov 1806]

My dearest Hetty,

I have written you two letters neither of which have yet left India although I wrote them in the hope & expectation that you would receive them at least a month earlier than this. We have been a very long time, without an opportunity of acknowledging your letters or communicating our thoughts to you. In both my former letters I have mentioned the subject nearest my heart, & all our hearts, the death of our dear loved mother. I trust I feel her loss (if loss to one it can be called) as a christian. I am thankful to the Almighty for the great benefits we have all received from her examples her meekness, moderation, her prudence which enabled her to do so much

with her very, very little; her innocent useful life, & all her virtues, appear to me as blessings bestowed upon all and as such we ought to be most grateful for them and rather to think of God's goodness in so long continuing to us such peculiar advantages than to repine at his will in taking her to himself after a well spent life & in such happy circumstances, attended by frinds [sic] & children who sincerely loved her. The account of this sad event we received on the 27th of June, and at the same time Sir Tho Strange arrived in India after his unworthy & unsuccessful journey, he brought out the news of his mothers death which happened after he left her & which he heard afew [sic] hours before he sailed. I do not think my dear mother **(2)** was in any danger of experiencing similar misfortune to Old Lady Strange had her life been continued to her as long, but I could not help comparing the events & I draw comfort from the comparison. When we came to India Old Lady Strange¹¹³ was in good health & quite flushed with spirits in the supposed success & greatness of her sons. The eldest of whom was married to the daughter of a great Minister, rich & powerful. The second a Chief Justice & the third whom she had not seen from a boy & consequently knew very little of, was a Col^L in the Army, all this from so humble a begining [sic] as hers might well be supposed to fill her heart with joy, & pride, & how terrible must the great change have been which she just lived to see. A visit which her son the Col^L paid her must have convinced a woman of her understanding that he could not be respected by any one, an Idiot, & a Sot. The eldest son & great support of all, became a Bankrupt & forced to quit his country at 53 years old,¹¹⁴ & Sir Tho^S having quitted his employment most dishonourably in hopes of regaining the wealth his brother had wasted, became the tool of a weak government, whose paltry or wicked vices he intended to forward by Ld Melvilles interest, his object was defeated by the disgrace of the Minister, himself on the verge of loosing [sic] his employment, & obliged to return disgracefully the bearer himself of a publick letter from his Sovereign addressed to the Courts in India expression of high disapprobation at his quitting the appointment his King had honoured him with. What a melancholy parting must this mother & son have had. Poor woman! it was too much for her, she sunk under it & died in three days afterwards. How unlike was this sad end to the peaceful departure of our beloved parent. Sir Thos Strange is the most altered man in the world, since his brother came out, to India, & he now seems to be running headlong into all the follies he can think of, he is just going to be married to a girl of nineteen ugly enough god knows, but he being 52, she has persuaded him

¹¹³ Isabella Strange née Lumisden.

¹¹⁴ James Charles Stuart Strange, who had returned to India in 1804.

that his resistless charms have won her heart & she has fallen so much in love with him during a month she has been staying at his house that he is obliged to take compassion on her young heart, & marry her, she is the daughter of Sir Wm Burroughs.¹¹⁵ The youngest of two who accompanied him here on his way to Bengal, he left this place a few days ago with his eldest daughter leaving the love sick lass behind him she is under the protection of Lady Wm Bentinck till the happy union takes place, these Miss Burroughs's have been dashing about London in a great deal of shewy but I suppose not very good company, for the father came to India a Barrister about 15 years ago, he never practised his profession at all but he made a large fortune entirely by gameing it is said above a hundred thousand pounds. This like other ill gotten pilf soon melted for he went home only 7 years ago, with all this money, lost every penny of it in the same way he gained it, is now very much in debt & come out here, (to the shame of those who appointed him) a Judge on the Bengal establishment, with these two girls absolutely brought to market to sing & play to any stupid booby that has got a sum of money to lose at Hazard & to marry themselves off as well as they can. We have had no (3) we have had no news from England either publick or private since April an unusually long time to be without an overland despatch, & we are all very anxious to hear what is going on under your new administration & what new appointments are intended for India. We hope to hear of some man of sense to be sent out to govern this important country, & whomsoever he may be he will find employment enough for his utmost exertions & abilities in undoing if that be possible the mischief the foolish obstate [sic] people have done your newspapers will of course be filled with accounts of the dreadful disasters in this country particularly the masacre [sic] at Vellore, with this I shall send you some papers which will be curious to yourself & your freinds [sic], one or two if I can procure them as I think I shall of the ridiculous orders of government which principally occasioned the mutiny. The discontent of the Troops has been quite general throughout the country, inexperience & obstinacy & extreme weakness characterise our government & all its measures. The concessions now made to the natives may probably be more mischievous [sic] than even the tyrannous [sic] orders themselves. The Indian Army is formed partly of Hindoos & partly of Mussulmans. They have until this time shewn great attachment to the English they submitted quietly to every regulation & fought our battles faithfully & well, & this because a few harmless prejudices of theirs have not before been interfered with. The Hindoos think themselves poluted [sic] by the touch of leather & the Mussulmans it is well known abominate the Hogs & every thing belonging to it yet the wise heads here must needs contrive either from

¹¹⁵ Louisa Burroughs. Her father William Burroughs (1753-1829) was appointed to the Supreme Court in Calcutta in 1806.

want of employment or want of brains, to make a new Turban in which a (4) piece of pig's skin was introduced; a stick of cows leather & this turban an order was given out to inforce [sic] the Seapoys [sic] wearing. The Mussulmans objected to the pig's skin & the HIndoos to the form of the Turban which they said resembles that of a Pariah, or outcast. They remonstrated but were punished & commanded to comply.

Another order was issued immediately after this in which it was directed that uniformity should be preserved in the looks of the Seapoys as much as possible they were to cut thir [sic] Whiskers for that purpose & the HIndoos were to appear without marks on thier forehead, how to tell a Hindoo that he shall not mark his forehead is much the same thing as if you were forbid to use the sign of the cross in Baptism, besides the timid fears of these poor people & thier superstitions: they were persuaded at one time that the English intended to convert them all to Christianity by force, & at another that they intended to make them & thier families slaves to them for ever, these are always the great evils they apprehend, & even the introduction of the Cow hat they for some time supposed to be introduced as a mark by which their children would one day or other be claimed by the company as slaves, finding however that was not enforced they have gradually complied with it; & possibly had these orders for the dress of the Army been given to the Officers commanding the Regiments, to be brought forward at their discretion, in the course of a few years they might have been submitted to, or at least the principle part of them; but no, these weak obstinate people would take no advice the order was issued & to be enforced all at once. The poor Natives persuaded that their eternal happiness was at stake determined to oppose & resist the thing they so much dreaded (5) & there is no doubt but a general massacre of the English was intended throughout the country, to talk of cutting or pulling a Mussulmans whiskers is the greatest insult that can be offered to him & the folly of requiring uniformity in the faces of a regiment is surely the most ridiculous thing ever heard of. If I were to write Volumes I could not relate half the ridiculous things which have been done here lately in direct opposition to all the advice of the most experienced persons in the country, certain it is that the mischief done cannot be undone in many years perhaps they never may our mutual confidence has been so completely shaken. Poor Mrs. Fancourt¹¹⁶ narrative I shall send you a copy of, & also another account given us by a Gentleman who was at Vellore. Col^L & Mrs. Fancourt & indeed many almost all the Officers who were killed there we know, some only by sight but others intimately. The Governor has now ordered all the Sepoys to wear what marks

¹¹⁶ Amelia Farrer, Lady Fancourt, wife of the commandant, Sir John Fancourt, and author of an eyewitness account of the Mutiny.

they please & when they please, now this is running into a contrary extreme for although a general order frightened them yet they have for many years been in the habit of complying with the request of their Officers not to mark their faces till after parade. The other day two companies refused to march as they were ordered without two months pay in advance this resistance was immediately communicated to the government & the demand was complied with. It is (I believe) the intention of the government to represent the sons of Tippoo¹¹⁷ (who were kept in the Palace at Vellore as a sort of state prisoners) as the cause of the mutiny by having incenced [sic] the Troops, & encouraged them with the hope of Plunder, & it is so far true, that they did, taking advantage of of [sic] the discontent of the army, endeavour to make a party & regain thier liberty, but undoubtedly the discontent which enabled them to make the attempt, originated in the ridiculous orders of Government. However even admitting [sic] that the Sons of Tippo - (or princes as they choose to call them, tho no princes at all) have been the sole cause of this shocking affair, then [words crossed out] why were these men placed in such a situation as to suffer them to do so much mischief? Why were men left in such a wretched state? They had very large allowances which they had no use for, they were guarded by troops which for the most part had been in their fathers service, and of course were easily bribed to secrecy with the gold they were so (imprudently supplied with.

You will see by a paper I send you how many British lives this business has cost, besides which the two Batalions [sic] of Seapoys were utterly cut to pieces & destroyed, & all this has been owing the folly of changing the form of a Seapoys Cap.

I hope long before time you have seen our friends Mr. Keene & Mr. Prosser & that they have both succeeded in getting the packages ashore which they were so kind as to take charge of. Mr. Toppington the mate of the Airly Castle took a large case containing an Argus Pheasant & many loose feathers of the same kind of Bird & also some other curious birds which may be worn as ornaments, should he have been so fortunate as to convey them safely to you you will see a curiosity which may be amusing to yourself & your friends, however should it be lost do not be uneasy about it for Betsy has another complete bird lately given to her, which she will send whenever an opportunity offers, but at this time we do not know any person going home whom we could ask to carry (6) so large a package. I shall send you by some person or other a few drawings, as you told me you & Dear Mr James, were pleased with the sketch of our house I have made you several others which though bad enough as drawing will yet serve to give you an

¹¹⁷ Tipu Sultan.

Idea of the places we have inhabited & I shall write their description on the back. We have a Mr. William in our house at present he is a captain in the Bengal service, a Son of Mr. George Williams of Friars Gate Hereford, whom you must recollect, this young man arrived yesterday & is come ashore to stay with us as long as the ships remain in the Roads, but that we expect will be but a short time, by him I shall perhaps, send the drawings, & amongst them you will find one which badly done as it is you will highly value it is the copy of our dear Mothers picture I shall also send to you a portrait of my most excellent friend Richard Clarke which I have done for his father, but it is his particular wish that it should be first sent to you, & that you will shew it to whomsoever you think amongst your friends will feel an interest in his favour. If you have received my letters which I wrote to you last March you will not be surprised to hear that you have one friend in whose mind he is particularly desirous of obtaining that interest, but least you should not have received those letters, I shall make use of the same contrivance I did then & on a separate half sheet, repeat as nearly as I can recollect what I then said. You will be so good as to send the portrait to Mr. James Clarke when you have done with it & he will forward (7) I am sorry to say my representation is very far from doing him justice for he has not much beauty of feature but a peculiar sweetness of expression which is very difficult to represent at least too difficult for me to catch, tho I feel as every one does who knows him its influence; he is most wonderfully beloved & is a proof that virtue must be pleasing to people of all description The picture has a dulnes[sic] in the eyes which he has not, & it is altogether graver and heavier [sic] looking which I beleive [sic] is owing to his not being able to sit to me regularly only at scraps & spare bits of time when perhaps he was tired with business. The mouth & lower part of the face is however somewhat better, but his eyes have a very sprightly arch look when he speaks. He is a well proportioned young man & a good hight [sic] about 5 feet 10 inches, his disposition is infinitely better than that of any young man I ever knew, for he inherits all his fathers generosity and benevolence, yet having more experience in the world in early life he is rather more cautious & attentive to worldly concerns, his temper is sweetness itself, he is never ruffled by trifles or sorrowed by misfortunes but he has occasionally shown that he has no want of proper spirit. This temper is joined to a mind perfectly virtuous to habits of industry, he has abided all the irregularities which young men usually fall into & that most honourably to himself for he has had the same opportunities & been exposed to the same temptations, but fortunately for him not till he had had sufficient experience to see the folly & great danger of doing wrong, he has strong feelings a very warm & tender heart, with extreme delicacy of manners & a great proof of their pleasingness is the high opinion the young men his acquaintances have of him, for they consult him as a superior in understanding & knowledge of business yet with the confidence which his

sweetness of temper naturally inspires, I do assure you I have never seen his equal, although (8) I have seen many good, & unless we could mix with beings of a superior order I am persuaded that in no one can be found less to condemn or more worthy of admiration. I believe you will have a letter from him both he & Mr. Biss threaten you with saucy ones too in return for the rubs you gave them in your last letter to Mr. Biss about thir [sic] not writing regularly, & giving a proper account of the things you send them out. Poor Richard was rather unlucky in his investment having to this time never received the Cloth for coats, which you mentioned or the cotton stockings & three pair of the silk ones, We suppose you must have made a separate package of those articles & sent them by some other ship for if Mr Prosser had brought them I think he would not have forgotten it, & yet you did not mention (in any letters which has come to hand), that you had separated those things from the other packages. The box of Paints also which you have repeatedly mentioned we have never received, but as the Indian ships have been so unlucky lately we conclude that those things & doubtless many letters have been lost, the loss of the Lady Burgess from the last Fleet which arrived here was a dreadful thing, & as she was the only ship for this place direct she of course had all the Madras letters in her except those which came by private hands we thought ourselves very fortunate in having these you sent us by Mr. Graham they were a great relief to our minds & it was particularly gratifying to us at that time to see a person who had seen you. We have been in hopes of receiving the Packages you mention in those letters before this time & I have delayed writing as long as I could in expectation that should have the pleasure of acknowledging their arrival but as the ships they were to be sent by have been detained at Portsmouth so late as the end of May, (which we find they were by an overland despatch arrived yesterday) we begin to fear the ships will be forced to go to Bengall to avoid our monsoon which is near setting in & in that event they will probably not put in here till January or February the letters will however be sent round by the Post, if it should be the case, but there is yet a chance that they may come here. We were very anxious for their arrival some time ago as we had great difficulty in procuring any decent mourning & have really been forced to wer [sic] wretched things we have had muslin dyed in this country for every purpose which looks well enough but they have not the art of fixing the colour so that our poor skins are every night as black as our gowns, & the smell of the dye they use is very odious. Our friend Mr. Biss is as you will hear from himself still at Madras but Ld Wm has said that he & all the young men of the Institution are to be sent on surveys to different parts of the country as soon as the cool weather commences. Wm Shewed me part of a letter he received from his sister in which she says her mother had requested her to write to me but she did not choose to begin the correspondence, but declined it from (diffidence giving reasons for so doing which are by no

means well founded, for she certainly is a remarkably good writer & would be a very valuable correspondend [sic] to me. The ground on which she has declined writing to me makes it a very delicate matter for me to begin otherwise it is a thing I very much wish to do, & perhaps before the ships sail I may prevail on myself to sacrifice my modesty to my gratitude which is very great to Mrs. Biss & her kind & excellent family for their attention to my dear mother my feeling on that account direct me to do any thing & every thing that lies in my power, to oblige them. (9) Genl Trent will no doubt be curious to see the accounts of the Vellore business & I shall refer him to you for them as I cannot get them copied again in time. Richard has sent copies to his father & I believe to his uncle.

We have a very fine young man living with us at present he has been with us these three months his name is Gwatkins¹¹⁸ he is of a very genteel family in Cornwall & has been remarkably well educated in every respect he is in the Civil service & was introduced to us by a letter from Mr. Cove who is somehow distantly related to his father, his mother is a niece of Sir Joshua Reynolds we are never without one two or three young men in the house nor indeed are any of the families in Madras for it is thought both dangerous & disreputable for any youn [sic] man to live at a Tavern, in general they take houses of their own as soon as they have appointments, but Sir Henry & Richard are both so fond of Mr. Gwatkin that although he has had a very good appointment some time, they cannot make up their minds to part with him. Poo [sic] young Bennington whom I mentioned to you in my former letters is lately dead, he came out with Ld Wm Bentink which circumstance his parents thought would secure his fortune being made but unfortunatley [sic] they forget that the poor boy had not abilities to do himself credit & consequently that their having him in the ship was rather a disadvantage as it gave them an opportunity of knowing his weakness but too well, & they never paid him the smallest attention. Poor creature he was both weak & faulty for where he left us [sic] & joined his Regiment he fell into all the follies of the young men he met with & they are a very profligate set in his Regt he gambled swore horridly & practiced other vices in short he destroyed his health & came here such an object so thin & gostly [sic] that he was a shocking spectacle & quite a hopeless subject for by the account of Biss & Richard he declared that all his sufferings had not improved his principles, he was so very ill that the Surgeon, who attended him advised his going to Penang [?] & there he died I have kept this letter open as usual, till I am threatened with the packet closing without it but I always like you to have the latest information possible, I have copied the papers I sent you last march & enclose it least [sic] you should wonder what I am talking about in some

¹¹⁸ Edward Gwatkin (1784-1855).

part of this **(10)** I think you will now guess who is the person therein alluded to. I have not said one word about my niece because it is so long since I heard of her; I heartily pray for her health & beg you will give her a thousand kisses for me, I have sent some little drawings for Mr. Keene, but have directed them you because I like that you & George Samuel should see them pray remember me most kindly to him & tell him I hope to receive [sic] some hints from him. I have been trying to work in body colours a little lately & I send you a specimen, of my performance, in a copy I have made of a holy family from a print, you will find it amongst the drawing which are for yourself, I think I shall like it for some things & therefore beg the favour of you to send me the following colours & c which I am sure God will have the goodness to assist you in procuring [sic], & I beg the favour of you to let them be properly packed & directed for Me.

Drawing paper of every description & size. 1 Dozn Sheets each brushes of all sizes for water colours ---1Do--

Sky brushes one or two, two good penknives & 2 pair of scissors

(Paste do---do--- one small palette knife or powder knife, 2 ounces of red Lake

2 do --prussian blue these are for the body coloring

¼ pound of Okre

[sic] 1 Ounce of

Smalt

2 do -- brown pink

(11) Cake of Gaul

stone 1 Do Prussian

blue

(12) Do Lake

2 Do Indigo

2 Do Vandyke brown

I believe I have nothing more to add to this but my last love to dear James & a thousand blessing & kind wishes for you all, & to assure that I am most affectionately yours

M Symonds

(1) Per H.C. Ship

Sheatham

M^{rs}. James.

No 39 Bishopsgate Street within

London

[An Account of the Vellore Massacre written in an italic hand]

On the morning of the 10th July an insurrection which had been planned and concerted between the Princes, and the Native Troops of the Garrison of Vellore broke out in that Fortress at half past two o Clock. _The Smallest alarm was not excited or the least Suspicion of what was to take place, felt by any of the Europeans within the Fort, till the moment of the Mutiny taking place._ From the result of long and careful enquiries, it appears that the resolution to attempt the insurrection and to effect the massacre of all the Europeans on that night, was not taken till the Evening of the same day, when the intention was communicated to the Palace, and to Prince Moizuddeen¹¹⁹ __ Preparation were accordingly made, and the Principal Conspirators took the duty of the Main Guard, and the different Guards__ Most of the N.C. & N.C. Officers in charge of the different Guards, were those who were Principals in the Conspiracy and bound by oath to attempt the establishment of a Mussulman Government, and the destruction of all the European. It appears that the Men on the Main Guard were ordered after being relieved to load, by which precautions the greatest proportions of the Men on the Guard were loaded by 12 oClock. The 1st Bⁿ 1st R^t had the whole of the Guards

¹¹⁹ Muiz-ud-Din, son of Tipu Sultan.

The 2nd Bⁿ 23rd R^t had been warned for a Field day the following morning, and had been supplied with blunt Cartridges_ To be ready for the Field day, a greater proportion of men than usual slept in the Barracks, and it appears to have been from this Circumstance that it was resolved by the principal Conspirators that the attack should be made that night

(2) The Garrison Guards consisted of 256, including non Commissioned Men, and about 535 of the 23rd were in the Barracks Exclusive of the Garrison Guards it may be estimated that the Number of Men of the 2nd Bⁿ 2nd R^t on Regimental duty and off duty in the Barracks amounted to 103 Men_ There would therefore be about 900 Men within the Fort._ As soon as the hour of Two was struck and in Consequence of Messages having passed from the Main Guard to the Barracks Subidar Sheikh Adam, and Jemidar Sheikh Hussain of the 23rd awakened the Sepoys of that Corps, and ordered them to rise, arm, and fall in._ Those who were dilatory or questioned the Motive for such orders, the Jemidar struck and abused_ The Regimental Piquets were the first that got ready, and the Two Light Companies of each Corps The two Native Officers broke open the Regimental Stores, brought out Barrels of Ball Ammunition, and ordered the Sepoys to fill their Pouches-- as soon as a sufficient number were ready and formed they were marched down to the European Barracks, which they surrounded. About half past two, a single Musket was fired as a Signal--at this instant the Sepoys of the Main Guards who had previously loaded, jumped up and fired (13) upon the Europeans at the Guard who were Sleeping, and at the same instant, the Sepoys who had surrounded the Barracks commenced firing upon the Men who were Sleeping_ The firing became immediately general, and the Drum of the Main Guard which Commenced beating to arms was instantly silenced, and the Drummer Shot_ The 3 Officers on the Main Guard were also instantly shot The firing Continued and the Sepoys having Surrounded the Houses of the Officers prevented them getting to the Barracks The Europeans in the Barracks had only 6 rounds of Cartridges in their Pouches, and the Sepoys had possessed themselves of their Magazine, as well as the Arsenal--a heavy and destructive fire was kept up, upon the Barracks thro' the Windows; about 5 oClock the Sepoys had got 3 Six Pounders to bear upon the Barracks, and opened a fire of round and grape Shot, which did great execution_ The Europeans being unable to get out of their Barracks, the Sepoys had entire possession of the Fort, and were dispersed all over it, and along the Ramparts firing in every direction, and by word of Command.

It might have been hoped, that at daylight this horrid Mutiny would have ceased, but the fire became much heavier and smarter._ It now appears, that about 6 oClock the Sepoys went to

the Palace, and the Native Officers had a conference with Prince Maizuddeen, and Mahuddeen received from his Servants, the Mysore Flag which was instantly hoisted, and the Sepoys were presented with Beetle, Rice, &ca &ca &ca in the Palace__ A great number of the Palace adherents came into the Fort, and assisted in the insurrection, and assisted in working the Guns, and taking aim at the European Barracks The Guards posted on the outside of the Fort, came in, and joined the insurgents_ The Men who had slept outside the Fort the preceding night (about 500 Men) as well as the Sick from the Hospital came in, and also great numbers of the Inhabitants.

The Sepoys had by this time put to death every European Officer that was found and plunder and liquor soon engaged their attention Every House was plundered of every article in it, and the different Cash Chests in the Public Offices, most fortunately at this time began to occupy their attention_ Entirely occupied with drink and plunder they soon became unruly, and inattentive to the instructions of the Principal Conspirators, and every attempt to make them Unite for the purpose of securing the Hill Fort, and adopting the necessary precaution for maintaining the large Fort proved ineffectual The Sepoys and the Inhabitants were promiscuously engaged in plundering the Paymaster's Cash Chest, and the different Officers Houses._ The firing was still kept up, upon the European Barracks._ It happened by **(14)** fortunate accident that Mr. Jones, Surgeon, Mr. Dean, Assistant Surgeon, Lieut. Adjutant Ewing, Lieut^t Mitchell, and Captⁿ MacLachlan driven by the fire of the Sepoys out of their own houses, assembled in one House, and by disarming a small Guard posted at Lieut^t and Adj^T Ewing's they were enabled to defend themselves from the fire of the Sepoys till greater numbers attacking them, they were driven out of their house, and succeeded in getting into the European Barracks__ After getting in, they headed the Men of the 69th, made a dash out, and formed, they got upon the Ramparts, which they soon cleared, and took down the Mysore Flag_ In this operation one man who had ascended the Flagstaff was shot from the Outside of the Fort_ The 69th soon got possession of the Gates, and kept them_ about this time the alarm was spread that the Cavalry were coming_ The Sepoys who were busy plundering, threw down their Arms, and made their Escape thro' the Sally Port by hundreds_ about Ten oClock Colonel Gillespie with the advanced Squadron of Cavalry arrived, but having no Guns with it, no thing could be done till the remainder of the Regiment came up__ The Colonel was drawn up with ropes over the walls into the Fort, and took the Command of the 69th. The remainder of the 19th Regiment, and all the Native Cavalry Soon after arrived, blew open the Gates, and charged into the Fort Very little opposition was made, a smart fire for a few minutes was kept up, but soon ceased_ The Fort was of

course instantly recovered, and the barbarities committed during the Morning by the insurgents exposed_The following Unfortunate Victims to their brutal Rage were cruelly, and inhumanely Murdered._The Sick Europeans in Hospital were also cruelly Massacred Every Officers House was plundered, and the Survivors had nothing left, but the Cloaths on their backs A few Officers lived outside the Fort_at the Commencement of the Mutiny Captⁿ Stevenson of the 23rd fortunately galloped off to Arcot to communicate the alarm of what was taking place at Vellore__His report happily procured the assistance of the Cavalry under Colonel Gillespie, as before Stated_Lieutt Colonel Forbes, and Major Trotter who also lived outside finding they could not get into the Fort, went up to the Hill Fort with Colonel Forbes's family, and were joined by a few other officers__The Guard upon the Hill received them, and behaved steady, tho' it is now ascertained some of them were in the Secret._Immediate Examples were made of some of the insurgents taken in arms, and many were cut up by the Cavalry, on the outside.

The number of Men of both Corps, computed to be killed, on the morning of the 10th July is 500 Men.

- The following is an Abstract of the Europeans killed and Wounded by the insurgents on the Morning of the 10th

	Colonel	Lt. Colonel	Major	Captain	Lieutenant	Pay Master	Deputy Commissary	Conductor	Laboratory (Sarjeants?)	(Sarjeants?)	Corporals	Gunners	Drums	Privates	(Grand?) Total
Killed	1	1	1	2	7	1	1	1	1	11	4	2	1	73	107
Wounded	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	65	76
Total	1	1	1	4	9	1	1	1	1	15	7	2	1	138	183

Upwards of Twenty of the Wounded, have Since died._

List of Officers killed and Wounded on the 10 July.

Killed.

	Colonel Fancourt	Commanding Officer
Garrison Staff	Mr. Smith Mr. Mann	Pay Master Deputy Commissary
H.M.69 th	Lieut ^t Popham Lieut ^t Ely	
1 B ⁿ 1 R ^t	Capt ⁿ Miller Lieut ^t Oreilly Lieut ^t Smart Lieut ^t Tichbourne	
16 R ^t	Major Armstrong	
2 nd B ⁿ 23 ^d	Lieut ^t Col ^l McKerras Capt ⁿ Willeson Lieut ^t Winship Lieut ^t Jolly	

Wounded

69 R ^t	Capt ⁿ Bairow Capt ⁿ Maclachlan Lieut ^t Mitchell
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1 B 1 R ^t	Lieut ^t Cutcliff
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Several attempts were made to get a party of Sepoys to go, and secure possession of the Hill Fort, but owing to their being engaged in plunder, they could not be collected__ It appears there were but few Native officers within the Fort during the Mutiny, most of them having gone up to the Hill Fort.

The insurrection appears to have been planned and matured for two months previous to its actually breaking out__ The attack had been resolved upon to take place twice previous, but the day had been changed__

- Copy of a letter from Captain Smythies

The poison [~~has~~] I fear is dessiminated [sic] far & wide, who would have thought that at the same time the atrocious deeds were perpetrated at Vellore the same plans were entered into at Hydrabad [sic].

The night that was to have proved fatal to every European in the place is supposed to have been the 12th. In the dead of the night when all was hush, certain of the Band assembled to carry into execution their fatal purpose. All of a sudden the most dreadful howling vibrated from one end of the line to the other (a mile in length) it proceeded from the Wives and the families of the Sepoys endeavouring to drag their husbands to their houses & induce them to desist from their design fearing the European Regiments would ultimately overcome & make a dreadful example of them, such effect it produced as completely to ruin the line, The Artillery fell in and the people finding every one upon the alert retired to their respective houses; their plan being thus frustrated of course it took further time to concoct any measure that was to be adopted. Things were a suspicious appearance on the 26th when the 15th Regt were at Parade, the 1st Battalion of them took their stocks off & threw them on the ground, in defiance of discipline & every other consideration, I observed a man of the Grenadier Company of the 2nd Battalion seize his stock evidently to induce the remainder to follow his example I instantly stepped out of the Ranks & seized him, which had such an instantaneous effect that no other man in the Corps pulled off his stock the 1st Battalion's seeing they were not followed by the 2nd Battalion (such

cowards are mutineers) immediately buckled on their stocks again and the regiment was peaceably dismissed for the evening. As I was returning to my house I was hooted and insulted by the Grenadier company of the 2nd Battⁿ who would not quit their lines & something serious was expected to happen. If any thing does happen they vow to be revenged upon me however I have the consolation to know I am well armed & should be able to shoot two or three probably before they would force me to retire

- Extract from the standing order for the Battalion of the Regiment of Native Infantry established by the Commander in Chief in General orders dated 13th March 1806-

10- It is order by the Regulations that a Native Soldier shall not mark his face to denote his Cast, or wear Earrings when dressed in his uniform & it is further directed that at all Parades & upon duties every soldier of the Battalion shall be clean shaved on the chin. It is directed also that uniformity shall as far as it is practicable be preserved in regard to the quantity of hair upon the upper lip--

- [in an italic hand]

General Orders by Government

August the 1806

The Right Honorable the Governor in Council has derived great Satisfaction from information that the Sepoy named Mustapah Beg¹²⁰ of the 1st Battn 1st Native Regm^t who gave the only intimation which was Received of the projected Mutiny at Vellore previously, to the Occurrence of that unhappy event, has returned in Safety to that Garrison.

His Lordship in Council regrets the Circumstances which precluded A more early attention to the intelligence which was Conveyed by that faithful Sepoy of the treacherous intention of the Native troops of the Garrison of Vellore, But his Lordship has the highest Satisfaction in Conferring upon Mustapah Beg a reward proportioned to the Honourable proof which he manifested of his fidelity & Attachment to the British Service

¹²⁰ Mustafa Beg's earlier warning had been ignored and he was penalized for it.

- His Lordship in Council has - Accordingly resolved that the Sum of 2000 Pag/a [Pagodas] Shall be immediately presented to Mustapah Bag [sic] & that he shall receive for the remainder of his life a pension equal to that of a Soobadar of Infantry. His Lordship has further resolved that Mustapah Bag [sic] shall be presented with a gold medal in the name of the Governor in Council as a badge of honor & distinction

[note by F. W. Blunt, 1906]

- The Mutiny at Vellore, July 1806

Exactly 100 years ago, and almost exactly 50 years before the appalling mutiny which shook the British rule in India to its very foundations, a mutiny & massacre at a smaller scale occurred at Vellore then a fortified town situated about 88 miles to the west of Madras. After the conquest of Seringapatam in 1799, the whole of Tippoo Saib's family, twelve sons and eight daughters, were removed by the British to Vellore, which was fitted up for their residence & [word crossed out] a liberal allowance was made for their support. On the 10th of July 1806 a revolt & massacre took place in the town, in which some of the family of Tippoo were active participators. The causes which led to this mutiny, and the circumstances of it, are narrated in the following letter, which was written from Madras in September 1806 by a lady whose husband occupied a high position in the Government there, and from which it will be gathered that the outbreak at Vellore was not an isolated attempt, but was intended to be followed by others, the consequences of which might have been far more serious.¹²¹

- [blank]
- [blank]

Letter-072-MS-03-1807 Mary Symonds to Hester James, March 4, 1807 (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 365r-368v)

(1) Madras 4th March 1807

My dearest Hetty

¹²¹ This is in reference to the account by Amelia Fancourt, which Elizabeth refers to Mary having had. It is no longer among the collection of letters, but it was published by Hester James' descendant along with the note here and a selection from one of Elizabeth's letters, F. W. Blunt, "The Mutiny at Vellore (July 1806)" *The Monthly Review*, 24, no. 72 (1906-09).

I wrote to you last month A pretty long letter by Mr. Ball a worthy & much injured man who I hope will arrive safer in England & succeed in obtaining redress for the wrongs he has sustained under this most arbitrary & oppressive government, he will be able to tell you some particulars of us & of the situation Sir Henry stands in, he is the only man who has spirit to oppose the measures he can but condemn. I have written a long letter to the Thoburns giving them as circumstantial an account as the limits of a letter would admit of & I shall send to you all the papers I can collect copies of, on the subject & as your communications will of course be mutual I shall consider it matter of little consequence to whom they are addressed. In my last, I had the pleasure of acknowledging all the Packages you had so carefully & nicely collected & packed for us. We have dressed 3 of the hams which are excellent & the confectionery is all come very dry & good, being packed in bottles. Betsy was delighted to see the Almonds which are the first we have received dry. & she & Sir Henry are pecking at them every day insomuch that there is a great appearance of a drying wind having found its way into the bottle. The only things which have suffered in carriage are some bottles of Capilaire,¹²² only two of which arrived whole but that is quite immaterial as we have very little use for it & the natives understand making beautiful clear syrop which answers the same purpose. Betsy made presents of some of the pieces of muslin which were very much admired, & all the gowns are neat & elegant. The white beads are a beautiful imitation of Cornelian & the blue & black ones are a very pretty & pleasing variety. All the head dresses appear very pretty but we have not yet worn **(2)** many of them the Caps, two or three of which Betsy has tried are very Genteel & becoming. The mobs are much worn here but I cannot say I am an admirer of them for I have seen but one woman who looked well in them & she is a very handsome & dashing looking body, a Lady Ogilby lately come out. The little worked Caps & shirts both made & unmade I like much, they are so light & so easily done up. The Tiara & bands are very pretty & what I like very much & one of the grey nets I put on as soon they were unpacked & have worn it every day since I am now writing in it.

The shoes fit me exactly & I hope the man will not lose the measure as a straw shorter would not fit, & I do not like them too big. Richard Clarke is much pleased with his cloth & c, & the soap you have sent is very acceptable pray add a bar or two of common, mottled soap to the next packages, & if you can without inconvenience send a doz or so of bottled goosberries [sic] & currants they will be an extraordinary treat. The cranberries are come beautiful & most acceptable

¹²² Capilaire or Maidenhair refers to a fern in the family *Adiantum* used to make a medicinal syrup, sourced either from southern France or Canada.

they are. I have only opened one pot of your preserves which was a strawberry pot & excellent, but I think stone pots are preferable to the white ones & the preserves which come in them are higher flavoured, & the risk of breaking is not so great. Your old walnuts, & a pot of brown mushrooms are all we have opened yet, both are as good as possible In future do not trouble yourself to send so many varieties of sugarplumbs [sic] for although they look very pretty & are very ornamental to the table yet as those which have fruit in them do not keep very well (such as the barberrysugar plums &c) & as the Coloured ones are not admired in flavour they are scarcely worth the trouble &c.

The desirable things are, Scotch Carraways, Almonds candied, little white carraways, Barley sugar, & Orange (& cinnamon, candied) Chips, Peppermint, Tolo & Refined liquorish Lozenges, Raspberry Vinegar, [Nargoo?] Cherry & Raspberry brandy & brandy Cherries____. I have lately been favored by Dr. Berry with his permission to make the first drawing of a plant which is quite new his being the first that was every [sic] possessed by an European. This is the Columbo, the root of which is a very fine medicine.¹²³ A Mr. Fortin who commanded a Trading Vessel, was requested by Dr. Anderson & Dr. Berry to procure for them from the Mozambique A piece of the Columbo root in the state in which it grows, for the usual methot [sic] of preparing it for traders is by cutting the root into small pieces or thin slices & drying them. Mr. Fortin procured from the People of Madagascar a large piece of the root nearly a foot long, & when it arrived here it had the appearance of a dried yam, & it looked so dry & dead that they had not a hope that it would vegetate; however being fond of experiments of this nature they determined to put it into A Tub of mould & try if it would be affected by it, when to their great surprise & satisfaction, after some time it put forth a green shoot which grew very rapidly, the leaves resembling Cucumber leaves, & from the point of each leaf there grew a cluster of very small Flowers, which unfortunately the Botanists find to be all male flowers so there is no fruit, but I believe they say it is a Bironia, I shall however get it accurately described, & will send home by the next ships a copy of my drawing of the root leaf & flowers which you will have the goodness to shew to Mr Whitley & let Lizzy take a copy if she wishes it, & then present service [?] to Dr. Sims_ This is speaking all in good time you will say as I do not intend to send it 'till the next ships, but my reason is this Dr. Berry has **(3)** had a drawing made of the root only by a Native, & this he intends to send to England by these Ships but it is so very ill done that it gives

¹²³ *Jateorhiza palmata* (Lam.) Miers, a medicine long known in Europe, but whose origins had been deliberately obscured by the Portuguese who traded it from Mozambique.

no Idea of the thing either in form colour or texture, however as it will be thought a great curiosity by naturalists it is possible Dr. Sims may see or hear of it.¹²⁴

We have no good opportunity of sending any thing home by these ships as I do not know any one family who are to sail by them, I believe the passengers are all people from the Interior with whom we are unacquainted. I therfor [sic] think you will receive [sic] nothing from us except two or three little Carnelians which are not worth mentioning but I give them to Mr. Lee as he wishes to carry something for us. There is a red heart & a pair of drops for Nancy Green, A cross and a pair of drops for you & a heart which was presented to me & is mad [sic] of Petrified Tamarind tree, of which curious substance I also send you a specimen in the rough state. Mr Biss had been for some time stationed at the Village where it is found & great numbers of trees may be seen there quite whole & perfect in their form, he sent me two pieces of it, & I have an account of it which was collected & written by a Mr. Fallofield who is the Resident at Pondicherry near which place the Village is situated, I will send you this account as it may amuse you & it is curious. The place is very much infected (4) with Tigers & Leopards. Wmm Biss has seen several & one, the other day crossed the road in which he was riding, within 3 yards of him. They are very bad neighbors, but there never was known an instance of a Tiger venturing into a Tent & in the day time they keep to the woods entirely except when compelled by thirst they come down to the edge of a River or Tank to drink. Wm Biss is vastly indignant about a lecture his sister sent him out for not writing, his is a curious fellow for he expects to have long letters from all his friends filled with most interesting particulars & to return short ones, & my gentleman is so touchy, so very tender that it is high Treason but to hint that any thing he does is not what you wish it to be, he is a good soul but I believe he will be spoiled for every body loves [?] him wherever he goes, & I find the Pondicherry Ladies are setting thier [sic] caps at him mightily. I wrote him a long letter the other day, & he returned me a small sheet of paper with four short paragraphs three of which were messages to be delivered to other people & the one which was to me was only an acknowledgment of my letter. So I sat down immediately & paraphrased his epistle & sent it to him as a letter & now he writes to Richard that I have put a sad quiz upon him, & sent him the shape & form of his own letter word for word, he seems to a little annoyed by it but he is not angry as I know he would have been if I had used any other method of reproving him. He says he is going on extremely well with his (5)

¹²⁴ Berry published an account of the root and a drawing, perhaps by the native artist mentioned here, in Andrew Berry, "An Account of the Male Plant which furnished the Medicine Known as Columbo or Colomba root," *Asiatick researches* v.10 (1811).

his Survey & has done twice as much as is required of him in the time he has been at work; which of course is very creditable to him, I am most happy in hearing of your having such charming companions as his two sisters, for from all I hear of them I am convinced they must be excellent fine girls, I wish the oldest who is so healthy & lively would take it into her head to pay her brother a visit she would be a great comfort to him & if she wished to marry I will answer for her having plenty of opportunities of good young men, with fair prospects which it is ever in the power of a good wife (who begin early to take care for him) to realize.

I shall write to Mrs. Biss this time to thank her for her kind letter to me & her excellent hams & pickles I wrote to Miss Biss by the last ships & I assure you glad enough I was of the opportunity for I have ever wished for a correspondent in Hereford I know enough of the place & people to make me relish an account of their proceedings, & I shall ever feel a strong attachment to it as the Place in which the happiest days of my life have been spent. & has having numberless real beauties to recommend it, which I never was truly sensible of until the last visit I paid, when I looked at each object (as I then thought) probably for the last time, and it will at least be a long, long--interval between my last look & my next should i have the happiness to see that hour, as I hope & trust in God I one day shall. You make me most happy by the pleasing accounts you send us of your dear little girl. I cannot tell you how much I long to see her sweet face, & to be known & loved by her. I find among my treasures a little heart as white & pure as her own, & therefore I have put it up (with the others) for her. I hope you will not have cause to be uncomfortable for want of letters from us as I wrote in January by Sir Thos Troubridge¹²⁵ & in Febry by Mrs Ball and as only 3 ships are dispatched now it is probable we may have some other opportunity which be assured I shall not omit.

I must beg of you to let me know how my dear mothers house is disposed of that is who inhabits it &c, as I fear Ned & Nancy will be but indifferent correspondents, I hope however as he grows up that our dear Tom will write for them. I hope to have time to send a few lines to him, but as I am very full of business, from a desire to copy some of the papers relative to Sir Henry it may not be in my power to do so, I however beg you will at all events communicate to all my friends my kindest regard, & good wishes & with my love to your spouse & bairns believe me

Your truly affectionate sister. Mary Symonds

¹²⁵ Sir Thomas Troubridge, 1st Baronet (1757-1807) was a Royal Navy officer.

(6) By the H.C.s Lord Casttenagh

M^{rs}. James

No 39 Bishopsgate Street

London.

Letter-075-MS-XX-1807 Mary Symonds to Hester James, n.d., (ca. 1803) (Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 376r-377v)

[No date, prior to 1807, she mentions a letter from her mother. The references to cut out figures suggest 1803]

(1) My dear Hetty

I had almost a mind to be lazy, & not write to you, by this opportunity, but I now think the enclosed company, may be able to afford you some entertainment & as I have had my share of amusement [sic], in making them it is but fair you should now have yours; however I fear I shall have some difficulty in explaining them to you. I intended to make a great many more, & to fix them in a box, to represent a street, but I fear if I do so you will have some trouble in geting [sic] them passed at the India house; they are done very slight, but I promise you some good drawings by the next ships; this method I invented to give you some Idea of the population of this country, I intended to place the rows of people very near to each other in a box, & they would then be about as thick, as the people are here in the streets; to a stranger it appears quite dangerous to drive through them, but the horse keepers, who march [?] by the side of the Carriage make a horrid noise calling to them to go out of the way, and they contrive to divide off, while you pass & I have never heard of an accident, I have written the names on the backs of these things, I shall send you a great many **(2)** figures done in the same way as there are an immense [sic] number of employments which I can describe better in that way than any other.

Toddy is a liquor which is drawn from the Cocomut trees, it is thought very wholesome if drunk early in the morning before the sun rises, & as soon as it is drawn from the tree, but if it is kept till the sun is up it becomes fermented, & has an intoxicating quality for which, the natives drink it. I

have drawn a toddy man, who is distinguished according to the custom by a cocoa palm leaf. The carriages of the natives are extremely elegant particularly the Hackery which is drawn by milk white Bullocks, I intend sending you an accurate drawing of one very soon, in the meantime there is one in one of these rows, which may give you some little Idea, you will also see a curious method of carrying children, two women carry a long bamboo stick with a piece of cloth tied to it in which the child is put, one of the rows consists entirely of women with chattys¹²⁶ and brass pots I intended to bend it round and make a little well in the middle to shew the manner of drawing water; it is never done by men, & a man would be much despised who should go near enough to hear the womens conversation there; the high cast women never carry the pots on their head, but on the shoulder & the Braminy women never touch any earthen pot They only use the Brass ones; They are also distinguished by wearing the cloth like trowsers [sic], as the men do, the other women wear theirs straight round like petticoats.

I have written to Nancy Green, & if I had time I could write a great deal more to you, but as the ship sails this evening I dare not stay any longer I hope to write again very soon, Pray tell James & George Samuel that they are the impudent fellows for not writing to us, & if they dont set about writing soon I shall begin a new plan with them, & write them such long tedious stories as shall tire their sleepy heads to read; pray tell G- S- I dont care a pin for him or his kitten, & the Thoburns are all snubs, naughty Girls what a set correspondents have we left behind us, I declare, you the only one that deserves to be called a friend, or that seems to be sencible[sic] of our absence, Your letter & my mothers gave us the greatest pleasure, but we were very sorry to hear that the children were not well I hope you will not miss any opportunity of writing if it is but a few lines at a time as I feell [sic] the greatest anxiety about the dear little boy pray tell me from time to time who he is most like, with my kind love to James & all my friends (3) (notwithstanding their sad neglect) I must conclude with a sincere assurance that I am

Your very affectionate Sister

M. Symonds

¹²⁶ CHATTY, s. An earthen pot, spheroidal in shape. It is a S. Indian word (Hobson Jobson)

The figures mentioned in this letter are those I have given to Sir Henry for the Miss Carews.
This was intended to be sent by a ship which afterwards did not sail but is still detained here.

M^{rs}. James

Letter-076-MS-XX-1807 Mary Symonds to her Sister, Hester James, n.d. [1807?]
(Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 378r-378v)

(1) I ^{have} told Mrs. Toussaint that you will call on her and I have requested Miss T- or her to help you in the choice of some things for us flowers feathers beads &c &c all the best of fashionables. They can be very usefull [sic] to you in that way, and I dare say Miss T- will go with you to some shops as she did with Betsy. I have written to them for a bonnet or two and some caps, and therefore they will pack with them and thing you like to buy for us unmade, but

don't let that little order prevent you from buying any pretty caps & c you may see at any other very smart place

Mrs. Toussaint lives at No 21

Jackville Street

To speak for Miss Fortin [?]

To tell Betsy about Mrs.

King

(2) By the
ship Calcutta M^{rs}.
James

no 39. Bishopsgate Street Within

London

H. Gwillim