

**LETTERS OF HENRIETTA
RATTRAY TO HER SONS IN
INDIA, A.D. 1800 TO 1814**

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Letters of Henrietta Rattray to Her Sons in India, A.D. 1800 to 1814 by Henrietta Rattray

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HENRIETTA RATTRAY

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INDIA, A.D. 1800 TO 1814**

Henrietta

LETTERS
OF
HENRIETTA RATTRAY

TO HER SONS IN INDIA,

A.D. 1800 TO 1814.

Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest.
King Lear.

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1878.

INTRODUCTION.

HENRIETTA RATTRAY was one of three daughters, children of Robert and Elizabeth Henshaw. She was born on December 3, 1751, at Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, and married James Rattray, of Arthurstone, in Strathmore, Perthshire, N.B. Her husband was in the naval service of the Honourable East India Company, and commanded the *Athol*, East Indiaman, burnt off Madras in 1783, and subsequently the *Phoenix*. She died at Wimbledon in 1818.

James and Henrietta Rattray had several children. Henrietta and Jane died in their childhood, in 1780 and 1796 respectively. Their eldest son, James, was born 1776, and entered the civil service of the Honourable East India Company, on the Bengal Establishment. He died at Calcutta in 1818.

The second son was Robert Haldane, who was born on November 26, 1781. At eight years of age he was sent to Winchester School. When thirteen

years of age he was a midshipman in the British navy, which he left at the more tempting offer of a 'writership' in the civil service of the Honourable East India Company. He entered as a 'Writer' in 1800, and retired from the service in 1851, holding at that time the post of Senior Judge of the *Sudder Dewanee* and *Nizamuth Adaluth*, at Calcutta. He died there in 1860, at the age of eighty.

The youngest, William, was born in 1786. He entered the military service of the Honourable East India Company, and died at Koonch, Upper India, in 1813.

Their only surviving daughter, Elizabeth, married Sir Joseph Sydney Yorke, a captain in the British navy. She died at the age of thirty-six, in 1812.

Subsequent to their departure for India, Henrietta Rattray saw none of her sons again. Her letters to them, here printed, depict her sorrow at this separation, which was intensified by the delay and uncertainty of communication with India in those days.

The following record of affection to the memory of his mother is left by my father, Robert Haldane Rattray. 'Of this *mother* I know not how to speak. In *my* eyes she was the embodied perfection of all that is good and beautiful. She was very clever; had been exceedingly well instructed and brought up;

and was as elegant as polished teaching, joined to a natural grace of action and manner, could render her. Her personal attractions were acknowledged by all. She was fair but not *pale*; her figure tall and rather full, but most delicately formed, with well-rounded limbs, and small hands and feet. The expression of her handsome face—with her large, speaking hazel eyes and the enchanting smile to which they gave animation—was the sweetest I ever looked upon. Her hair was long and wavy and of a rich glossy brown. I will only add—without the *power* of exaggeration—that altogether she was one of the most fascinating of God's creation, and as fair in mind as in person. She was the idol of her family, and the admired and approved of *all*!


A. RATTRAY.

21 TALBOT ROAD, LONDON, W.
September, 1878.

LETTERS
OF
HENRIETTA RATTRAY.

I.

SOUTHAMPTON : May 14, 1800.

 THANK God I am
. by him to some young
friends of mine in India, but I have been
so hurried as not to have time.

I am, my dear Madam,

Yours very truly,

R. S. . . .

This is the letter from a true disinterested friend whose counsels growing out of . . . and friendship I ought to follow. I hope you will think so too, and that under his banner I may yet continue as I am till this affair is decided of Miss S. and Barnfield. Add to this letter a very kind one from Aunt Betsy,

NOTE. The greater part of the first portion of the manuscript of this journal is illegible from age and decay.

in which she says she is going to Southend to give poor little Robert sea-bathing. I infer that the J.'s will go with her. It has been the yearly custom ; but that will be known to me most probably by to-morrow's post. I own to my dearest children that I am more inclined to remain than to unroof myself. If your father will, as Steuart seems to think, sign, I shall be most easy in my circumstances. And now I propose to do thus—to work on here, which Steuart will show me how to do, till July. Your sister then must leave me ; and then I will offer myself as a visitor, on terms, to your Aunt J. for two or three months ; leave Sally here on board wages ; send James home, and return with either S. H. (whose little which she already pays in Ilford will indemnify me) or your Aunt H. In the meantime I have a superabundance of furniture. What I can choose to dispose of Hookey shall put into the first auction he has, as he did Mrs. Green's old chairs, and that will assist in the business of clearing all my debts. Such is the prospect which I contemplate, and if I realise it, I own I shall be happier if I could do as I have done on my income. Surely now that my dearest Robert is provided for I cannot fear, but I shall sit easy on it ; but it all turns on what your father will do. After July I can but adopt the plan of selling. I write to Steuart directly, and shall send up the copy, opinion, &c. I have seen

Galpine, who is to send the copies Steuart speaks of this night to

May 29.—A long interval in this, my beloved son, but you have been too near me, and indeed have, you know, in a manner been present since the above few lines were penned to permit me to gather together spirits cool enough to begin to journalise. But now, ah, my Robert! you are indeed no more expected. No more letters do I look for. I pause, for thoughts will occur, although I really will not count them, of anxious hue.

I received your last dear letter of dutiful remembrance of me which you wrote on Sunday from Torbay.¹ I answered it, but the wind having been more favourable since Sunday than it has yet appeared to be since you departed, I expect to have it returned. It is a painful thought that you did not get one of my letters after you last left me. I wrote every day. How blessedly mild has been the weather! Now do I raise my heart in humble thankfulness to the Almighty Power that disdains not to consider His creature's comforts. This serenity of weather does away one very bitter part of my present feelings, and keeps up my spirits; and your letters breathe such a spirit of cheerfulness as cannot fail to communicate itself to a mamma's heart.

¹ Robert Haldane Rattray sailed for Calcutta in the India fleet which left Southampton on May 22, 1800. Owing to a gale in the English Channel, the fleet was obliged to put into Torbay, from whence it sailed finally on June 2.