

**LETTERS WRITTEN DURING
A TRIP TO SOUTHERN
INDIA & CEYLON IN
THE WINTER OF 1876-1877**

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Letters Written During a Trip to Southern India & Ceylon in the Winter of 1876-1877 by C. R. Williams

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C. R. WILLIAMS

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LETTERS

WRITTEN DURING A TRIP

TO

SOUTHERN INDIA & CEYLON

IN THE

WINTER OF 1876—1877.

With Original Illustrations.

(PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.)

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NEWTON STREET, HIGH HOLBORN.

1877.

W. H. G.

BGT
W. H. G.

PREFACE.

IN the autumn of last year it was proposed to me to accompany my brother, the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, on his intended tour in Southern India; the objects he had in view in undertaking the journey being connected with his chair. After thirty-five years and upwards passed in the daily routine of professional life in London, I was glad of such a novel and interesting break. I accepted the proposal, and accompanied him. The following Letters were written as I travelled through the country. They are descriptive of my personal experiences only, and have been collected and are now printed for private circulation, in order to convey to my family and immediate friends the same pleasure which I myself enjoy in looking on rapid sketches from Nature done on the spot and not touched afterwards. The outline of our tour was as follows. We took our passage from Southampton, *viâ* the Suez Canal, direct to Bombay. Thence by rail due north to Ahmedabad, in Guzerat, about 300 miles distant from Bombay, and back to Bombay. Thence a fresh start by rail to Madras, stopping at Poona, and visiting the Sanitarium

W. Probsthain 29 July 1942

of Mahabaleshwur. From Madras to Ootacamund and the Nielgherries, and from thence southwards to Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Madura. From Madura by country roads to the Island of Paumben, and thence by sea to Tuticorin. The rail took us from Tuticorin inland to Palamcottah and Tinnevely and back to the coast again, and we embarked thence for Ceylon. From Ceylon my brother retraced his steps by rail to Madras, having further information to obtain there. I took the coasting-vessel along the Malabar coast to Bombay. We met in Bombay; and, after a visit to the temples of Ellora, returned together to England *via* Brindisi and Venice, stopping a week in Cairo *en route*. The illustrations are my own.

C. R. WILLIAMS.

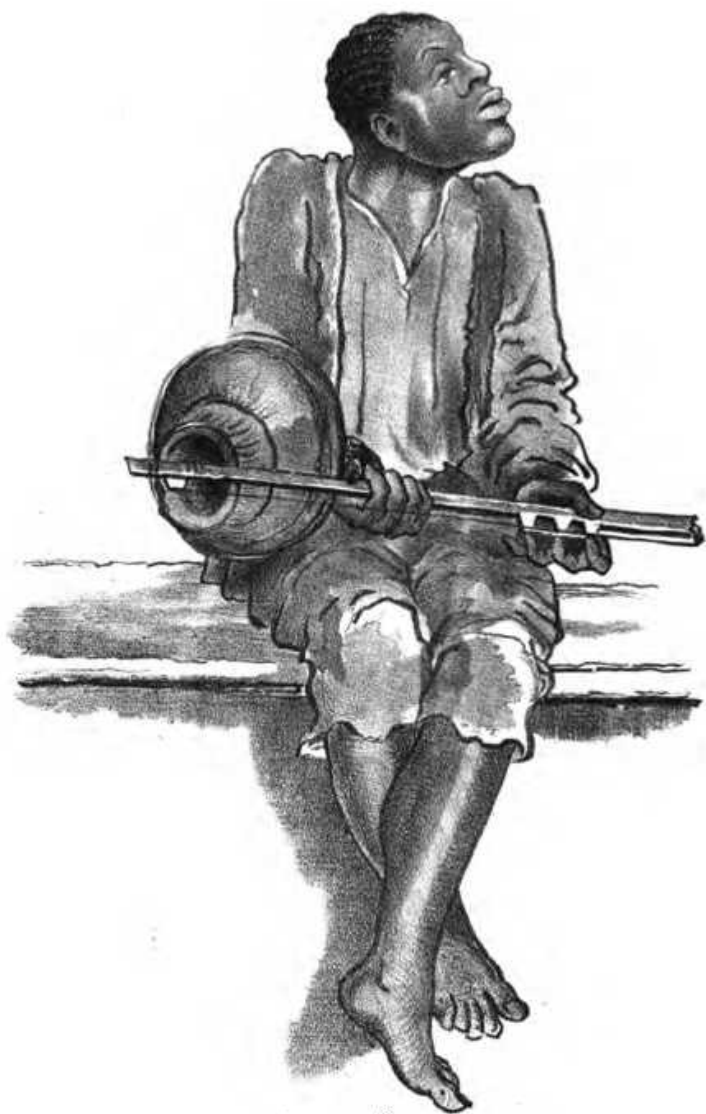
62, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,
May, 1877.

SS. "NEPAUL,"

Sunday, 15th October, 1876.

It is time I should begin a letter to you, but although it is time I could not have commenced sooner, for the Bay of Biscay completely polished me off, and I only was able to crawl out of my berth during the afternoon of yesterday for the first time. We had a fair run down the Channel, passing the fortifications on both sides of the Solent, which I had never seen before, and the Lighthouse at the extremity of the Needles; then, dinner over, at which I was as sprightly as possible, admiring the saloon of the ship brilliantly lighted along its whole length of upwards of 100 feet, the lights reflected by mirrors, and more like a Parisian first-class café than a thing on the ocean, I turned in. The next morning, resolved to begin my new life as I intended to continue it, I got up at six, and, after pursuing a very devious path to the baths amidships, contrived to have a sea-water bath. But I soon found that we were in the Chops of the Channel—a very different matter from the Solent—and when I got back to my berth I felt quite disabled. There I remained all Friday, all Friday night, and until 2 o'clock yesterday, dreadfully ill. I had no idea that I was such a bad sailor, but then I had never before been so tried. Poor Stanley was worse than myself—not so Monier, who was nothing more than squeamish, and instead of our looking after him he was our friend and nurse, and gave us his advice and assistance on his legs as if he were the ship doctor. We passed Ushant (not visible) about 10 on Friday morning, and then

fairly entered the Bay of Biscay. Most provoking, the weather was fine and even sunny overhead and no wind, but we had arrived at the tail of three weeks of unexceptionably stormy weather coming from the south-west. The "Mongolia" and the "Pekin," the two ships which had preceded us a week and a fortnight previously, had made bad passages. The "Pekin" had had some of her boats carried away, and shipped a sea at one time of fifty tons, doing a deal of damage. We had no such storms, but we came in for the Atlantic rollers—huge hills of sea, unbroken in surface, careering after each other at intervals of 200 or 300 yards from west to east, whereas our course was from north to south, so these great hills caught us broadside on, causing the ship to roll in a most uncomfortable manner; and this continued for thirty-six hours, until we had passed Cape Finisterre yesterday afternoon. I had incautiously left the scuttle open just over my berth to get fresh air; the ship rolled her lee side right under this scuttle, and in came the sea at the rate of a dozen fireplugs, drenching my bed and myself as if we had all been soused in the Bay. Ill as I was, I scrambled up, screwed in the bull's-eye, threw off my bedding, and did my best to change my things, and then lay down again in the most damp and miserable condition. Often and often did I ask myself, "Oh, Dolly, why did I leave your lovely valley and luxurious life for such misery as this?" But all is over, and Richard's himself again. We expect to reach Gibraltar late to-morrow night or early Tuesday morning, and so I am writing now in preparation. The vessel is a fine one—3,600 tons—iron—new this year—600 horse-power—355 feet long—40 feet beam—flush deck from end to end, which gives it an appearance of great length. The crew is composed of seven English quarter-masters and forty-three Lascar seamen, six English engineers, thirty firemen (Mussulmans), and fifteen Sidi men or negroes



Sidi Boy
playing on the one stringed Banjo
Hepaul.
Sunday 22 Oct.

for coal shifters. It really is extraordinary that the responsible government of this huge and complicated ship should practically be in the hands of thirteen Englishmen only, independently of the officers. The Lascar seamen are puny creatures, dressed in fancy dresses, but all with picturesque turbans, naked feet, and apparently unfit for any physical exertion. The Sidi men are scarcely human—negroes from Mozambique of the coarsest kind—very different type from the Lascars—big, muscular men, semi-nude, some without hair, others with ridges of wool along the head and chin like the furrows of a ploughed field. I would have given a good deal for a photograph of a batch of these fellows, sitting in limp attitudes on the iron grating over the boiler room before we started, grinning and chattering like huge baboons, very soon to descend 35 feet to the very bottom of the ship to keep up the fires below. It is a pandemonium into which, looking down the grating, we see these creatures working in the bright glare of the furnaces at a depth where no air can reach them; yet, when airing themselves on the grating, they appear in tip-top spirits and as happy as kings. Gladstone or Disraeli might give a good deal to exchange with a Sidi man, if happiness be the sole object of life. 12 o'clock. We have just finished Divine service in the saloon—the captain reading from a cushion covered with the Union Jack. The Lascars have swarmed up the rigging, notwithstanding their naked feet, and have set all the square sails of the ship, and she is bowling along with a rattling breeze aft, a heavy but beautiful sea surging from her bows—such a sea as Melby delights to paint, like molten lead, with touches of colour here and there rivalling the flashes of the finest gems. I am seated on the planks of the live-stock boxes, high above the gunwale, writing this, and every now and then looking off to enjoy the magnificent prospect of sea and sky. From this you will know that I have recovered from the effects of the