

ESSAY

LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Rabindranath Tagore



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PREFACE

TO MY DEAR FRIEND SRI CHARUCHANDRA DATTA

I was seventeen years old. I had been neglecting my studies and had become a source of anxiety to my elders. My second brother was then a judge in Ahmedabad. It was thought necessary that the son of a respectable family should somehow acquire proficiency in English; for this reason, our exile to England was decreed. It was decided by our well-wishers that I should first spend some time settling in with my brother, for that would provide a firm foundation. Thus, in the theatre of the Civil Service, we made our preparations behind the scenes, English-style.

In boyhood, one's self-expression remains suppressed; at that age, elders hold all authority, and the independence of one's own motive power is seized by orders, counsel, and discipline. By nature I was not inclined to obedience, yet I was an absent-minded sort of person, content to follow my own whims, and I appeared, to all outward seeming, quite a harmless creature. In later years I have had to speak a great deal, but the germination of that habit began in silence. One day, as I sat quietly alone holding the balcony railing, my elder brother, passing by, tousled my hair and said, "Rabi will become a philosopher." But from the soil of silence, crops other than philosophy also spring.

The first thing to appear in that field—untilled land that it was—was a thorn-bush: that insolence which seeks to establish its own existence by provoking the world. The stance a young stag takes when its first antlers sprout—that same fierce bearing belongs to early adolescence. The boy, in crossing the boundary of his own childhood, wishes to leap across the line altogether. My own such beginning occurred when, at the age of fifteen, I wrote a critique of *Meghnadbadh Kavya*. It was at this very time that I set out for England. Whatever letters I wrote then displayed, more than any claim to pure truth, a pure defiance expressed with great force. When a Bengali boy first goes to England, there are many natural reasons for him to find things pleasing there. That is natural, and no bad thing. But if one is seized by the urge to show off by girding one's loins, then one takes up the opposite

pose entirely—one is driven to say, "I am not like other men; nothing anywhere is worthy of my approval." That this is a shameful symptom of poverty of heart and a lamentable proof of an unripe, foolish mind—the age to understand this had not yet come.

Ever since literature came of age in me, I have felt shame regarding that book. I have understood that the dishonour done was not to the country I had visited, but to ourselves. Despite repeated requests from many quarters, I did not publish the book. But in this age hungry for curiosities, my refusing to publish it does not guarantee that it will remain unpublished forever. For that reason, I have marked which portions of this writing the author himself acknowledges as valid and which he disowns. In due course, some scavenger will come along with a basket for gathering rubbish, and there is every likelihood that these scraps will find buyers in the marketplace. Many an offence finds many an atonement remaining incomplete, to be fulfilled hereafter in this world or the next.

I wish to place this book in the ranks of literature, not in the ranks of history. What is worthy is valued in literature; what is unworthy has its value in history too. Could I have entirely deprived the historian, that would have been meritorious work on my part, and thus a path to liberation. I have resolved again and again to undertake this renunciation regarding my own poetry. But my weak mind has not been able to keep its vow against organized objection. I have had to entrust the task of selection to Time itself, wielder of the axe. But in this age of the printing press, even Time's duty has grown careless. Having lost proprietary rights over my books, I have been rendered still weaker.

The series of letters of the European sojourner is not entirely indefensible throughout. One thing may be said in their favour—their language. I cannot say with certainty, but I believe this is the first book in Bengali literature written in the spoken idiom. Today it is sixty years old. In this matter too, I shall not invoke the authority of history to plead my case. I believe the evidence of the natural expressive power of colloquial Bengali is to be found within these very letters.

Afterward, once the underbrush of the writing was cleared away, it became apparent that within it, reverence had lain hidden, while irreverence had sprung up on the surface, dense as weeds. It had overgrown the real thing, but had not destroyed it. Discovering this has given me great satisfaction. For I hold in utter

contempt the sharpness and cleverness of malicious criticism. The power to find things pleasing is the highest gift of Providence in human life. I have not accepted the fee for the banquet of those who delight in slandering literature—if nothing else, I wish to leave behind at least this much of a record.

One thing I need hardly tell you. The appearance of the Englishman that struck my eye in those days was not, I confess, wholly the product of my youthful ignorance and inexperience, though it would not be entirely true to say otherwise either. In these nearly sixty years, the change that has come over the people there cannot be called merely a gradual unfolding of expression. At times, on the ladder of history's centuries, one foot leaves its rung and history begins striding with giant steps. This has happened in the West. The picture that was on the passport of those days will not serve at all today.

In that first period, when I went to England, I did not go quite as a tourist does—that is, I was not confined to glimpsing things from outside while passing along the road. I was like a guest in a household; I gained entry into homes. I received care, I received affection, here and there I was rebuffed, I suffered sorrow. But afterward, when I went there again, I moved in society, not merely within a household. My experience of that earlier time, though not comprehensive, is nonetheless true. The doctor's family with whom I stayed belonged to the respectable class and were worthy of respect, but he could not represent the whole of respectable society. In England even today, whatever the equality of classes, class distinctions remain substantial. It is natural that between one class and another there, there should be no similarity of temperament and manner. Even in those days this was not in doubt. I gained close acquaintance with an ordinary middle-class household of that time, and with one household of fashionable society. Some description of both appears among these letters.

In a number of letters, I have described in some detail the Anglicized Bengalis of that period. Today this is an extinct species. Here and there some vestige of its current expression may still be glimpsed—indeed, even among those who never went to England, some trace of Anglo-Bengali mannerism suddenly surfaces in someone's bearing. I knew many of the Anglicized Bengalis of that era personally. Much of what I learned about them, I learned from their own mouths. If there is any exaggeration in this, it is their own doing. In describing themselves before me,

they were not afraid of exposing themselves, since these guileless, harmless boys did not suspect me of being dangerous. Were I to seek their pardon today, I should have to wait some days longer, for they now dwell on the far shore of the Vaitarani.

In my letter from England, I had quoted the song "This time I shall become a sahib." My beloved friend Sri Charu Bandyopadhyay has publicized this song as my own composition, offering it as an example of the comic vein in Bengali literature. Thereby the reputation of the anonymous author has been preserved, but we ourselves have not been. I believe that with due research, better examples than that one could be found in my own writings.

Twelve years after these letters were written, I went to England once more. By then the country had not yet changed very much. In the diary I wrote at that time there is a sketched picture—the sight glimpsed at a glance, of the surroundings passing by as one travelled in a hackney-carriage.

In the preface to the new edition of these books, I am writing this letter addressed to you. The reason is this: your experience of England is far broader and deeper—upon that foundation you will be able to judge the proper worth of these letters and this diary, and it will not be difficult for you to forgive their errors and excesses as unavoidable.

Yours,
Rabindranath Tagore

DEDICATION

Brother Jyotidada,

To him whom I remembered above all others in England,
into his very hands I offer this book.

Your loving,
Rabi

THE FIRST LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

On the twentieth of September we boarded the steamer "Poona." At five o'clock the ship set sail. We stood then at the ship's rail. Slowly, before our eyes, the last line of India's shore melted away. Unable to bear the clamour of people on all sides, I went to my own cabin and lay down. There is no particular need to conceal it—my mind had become strangely lifeless, dejected, downcast; but never mind all that pathetic talk—there is neither the leisure nor the wish to write of it; and even if I wrote it, either your eyes would fill with tears or your patience would run dry.

Prostration at the feet of the ocean! From the 20th to the 26th, how I passed the time, only I know. You doubtless know what "seasickness" means, but not what it actually feels like. I fell into that torment—were I to describe it in detail, tears would come even to a stone's eyes. For six days, sir, I did not rise from my bed. The room I stayed in was very dark, small, and—lest the sea's water should enter—all the windows on every side were completely shut. Untouched by sunlight, untouched by air, I merely survived those six days. On the first evening, one of our fellow passengers forced me from my bed to the dining table. When I stood up, everything inside my head seemed to begin tearing and cutting itself to pieces at once; I could not see, my legs would not move, my whole body reeled! After two steps I collapsed onto a bench. My fellow passenger took hold of me and led me—virtually carried me—to the ship's deck. I stood leaning against a railing. It was dark night by then. The sky was overcast with clouds. The wind blew against us. In that darkness, upon that shelterless, boundless sea, casting fire on both sides, our ship moved on alone; wherever one looked, there was darkness, the sea rising and swelling—it was a most solemn sight.

I could not remain there long. My head began to spin. Reeling, I returned again to my cabin. Once I fell upon that bed, for six days I did not lift my head for even a single moment. Our steward (the attendant for passengers)—I know not why—held a particular kindness toward me. At all hours of the day he would appear with food for me; he would not leave under any circumstances if I did not eat. He said that if I did not eat, I would grow "weak as a rat." He said he could do anything for me. I gave him ample thanks, and when leaving the ship, I gave him something rather more substantial than thanks.

After six days, as we approached Aden, the sea grew somewhat calm. That day my steward came and repeatedly urged me to rise and walk about a bit. Following his advice, I rose from bed, and rising, I found that I had indeed grown weak as a rat. My head felt as if carved from wood, ill-fitted to my shoulders; my body, like a garment of stolen cloth, seemed not quite to fit properly upon me. Leaving the room, I went up on deck and sank into a chair. After many days I felt the wind and revived. At noon I saw a small boat moving across that very sea. All around, far in every direction, there was no land; the entire ship's company was astonished. They began hailing our steamer; the ship stopped. They sent several men aboard our ship in a small boat. These were all Arabs, travelling from Aden to Muscat. They had lost their way midcourse; whatever water-barrels they carried had broken, and all the water had been spoiled, yet there were many passengers. Our ship's crew gave them water. Opening a map, they showed the direction and distance to Muscat, and the Arabs set off again. Everyone began to express doubt as to whether that boat would ever reach Muscat at all.

On Saturday morning, the 28th of September, I woke to find mountains and hills rising before us. It was a most beautiful, clear dawn; the sun had just risen; the sea was extremely calm. From a distance, that mountainous landscape's dawn scene was so beautiful I cannot say. The rose-tinted clouds over the mountains had bent so low that it seemed as if, having drunk their fill of the unaccustomed sunlight, they had no strength left to stand, and had sunk exhausted upon the mountaintops. Upon the mirror-clear, calm sea, small boats with their sails unfurled looked exactly like a painting.

Reaching Aden, I began writing letters home, but on trying to write I found that after these few days of tossing about, everything inside my head seemed turned topsy-turvy; a kind of anarchy had broken out in the kingdom of my intellect. How to write, I could not think clearly. My thoughts were like a spider's web—the moment I touched them, they tore to shreds. I could not properly arrange what should follow what. In this state I began to write: forgive me if, caught in such difficulty, I have been unable to write to you properly—you have no cause for grievance on that account.

You see, I have come to hold something of a disrespect for the sea. What I had imagined the sea to be in fancy does not match, in many respects, what I find upon

actually reaching it. Seen from shore, the sea seems very majestic, but once you are in the midst of it, it does not seem so grand. There is a reason for this: when I used to stand on the shore at Bombay and watch the sea, I would see the blue water merging with the blue sky in the far distance, and I would fancy that if only I could pierce that veil at the horizon, could lift that curtain of the horizon, then instantly before me an unbounded, infinite ocean would surge up all at once. What lay beyond that horizon remained within my imagination alone; it never occurred to me that beyond that horizon another horizon would simply follow. But once actually in the midst of the sea, one feels that the ship is not really moving at all, but is bound within the confines of a single horizon. For our imagination, the boundary of that horizon is so narrow that one can never feel satisfied. But look here—this should be kept a great secret; if from Valmiki down to Byron everyone has felt their fancy stirred by seeing this ocean, then if mine is not stirred, ten others will surely laugh at me; had I said this in Galileo's time, I might have been imprisoned for it. So many poets have sung praises of the sea that my slander today will probably not trouble them much. When waves rise, I suppose the sea looks rather fine, but to my misfortune, the moment the sea's waves rise, my head begins spinning so much that everything I see spins along with it.

When I began venturing out of my room, the passengers' eyes fell upon me, and my eyes fell upon them. I am by nature quite terrified of the "lady" tribe. Approaching them carries such a variety of risks that, had Chanakya the sage been present, he would have advised keeping ten thousand hands' distance from ladies. First, there is the possibility of all manner of lamentable accidents in the mental sphere—besides which, there is the constant fear of saying the wrong thing at the wrong moment, and our intolerant lady, unable to bear the slightest deviation from etiquette, becomes utterly overwhelmed with dreadful disgust and shame. What if one blunders through the forest of their gowns; what if, at mealtime, one is required to cut their meat; what if, attempting to cut a chicken's flesh, one cuts one's own finger instead—weighing all such considerations, I kept myself at a great distance from the ship's ladies. Our ship did not lack for ladies, but the gentlemen were forever grumbling that among them there was not a single one who was young or pretty.

Among the male passengers, I formed acquaintance with several. With Mr. B—— we became quite intimate. His talk was endless, his laughter incessant, his appetite

immoderate. He conversed with everyone, joked and jested with all. He has one virtue: he never speaks after weighing and measuring his words carefully; he jests, and whether or not there is sense in it at all times, he himself laughs until he is helpless. He does not calculate his words according to the gravity of his age and rank, does not laugh with restraint, nor does he express opinion while keeping both sides satisfied—for these reasons I liked him. There is no end to the childish antics he performs. When the wisdom of age and the guileless simplicity of childhood appear together in one person, I find it most pleasing. He called me "Avatar," he called Mr. Gregory "Gargari" (rumbler), and another passenger he called "Rohu-fish"; do you know what that poor fellow's crime was? His neck was somewhat shorter than ordinary men's; one might almost say there was no distinct connecting element between his head and his body. For this reason Mr. B—— had classified him among the fishes. But why I myself fell into the class of "Avatar," that is not so easy to explain.

Our Mr. T—— on the ship was rather a novel sort of fellow. He was a thoroughgoing philosophical type. I never heard him speak in ordinary conversational language. He did not converse—he delivered lectures. One day several of us were enjoying some light amusement on the ship's deck when, unfortunately, Mr. B—— remarked to him, "What lovely stars have come out." Whereupon our philosopher established a profound connection between the stars and human life, and launched into a lecture—we sat there "gaping like fools," as the saying goes.

There was an elderly gentleman aboard our ship. His body was like a palm tree, his moustache like a broom, his hair like a porcupine's quills, his mouth like an earthen pot, his eyes dull and glazed like a fish's—the very sight of him made my flesh crawl, and I would move five hands away. Some men, even without committing any offence, seem to be perpetually committing offence merely by their countenance. Every morning upon rising I could hear him showering abuse—in English, French, Hindustani, and every other language he knew—upon all the ship's servants, and stamping about in every direction. I never once saw him laugh; with no word to anyone, he would sit sulking alone in his cabin. Some days he would come out walking on deck, and as he walked, whomever he happened to glance at with that condescending look of his, he seemed to regard as no more than an ant.

At mealtimes, Mr. B—— always sat beside me. He was a Eurasian. But he had thoroughly mastered the English manner of whistling, standing with hands in pockets and legs apart. He regarded me with great favour. One day he came up and said in a most solemn tone, "Young man, are you going to Oxford? Oxford University is a very good school." One day I was reading Trench's book *Proverbs and Their Lessons*; he came, took the book, and, whistling all the while, flipped through a few pages and said, "Yes, it's a good book indeed." What fortune for the child! He showed me some particular graciousness.

From Aden it took about five days to reach Suez. Those who go to England via the Brindisi route disembark from the ship at Suez, take the railway train, and travel to Alexandria; at the port of Alexandria a steamer awaits them—boarding that steamer, they cross the Mediterranean Sea and reach Italy. We were overland passengers, and so we had to disembark at Suez. Three of us Bengalis, together with one Englishman, hired an Arab boat. How far the "divine" countenance of man may descend toward the beastly could be known by looking at the face of that boat's boatman. His eyes were like a tiger's, his complexion pitch-black, his forehead low, his lips thick—altogether, his face wore an expression of utter ferocity. He would not haggle over price with the other boatmen; he agreed to go for a slightly lower fare. Mr. B—— was not at all willing to travel in that boat; he said Arabs could not be trusted—they could cut a man's throat without the slightest hesitation. He related one or two dreadful, dreadful tales of lawlessness in Suez. But regardless, we did board that very boat. The boatmen spoke broken English and understood a little English too. We went a fair distance without incident. Our English passenger needed to visit the post office in Suez. The post office was quite far, and it would take considerable time to get there, so the boatman objected a little; but the objection was soon overcome. Then, going a little further, he asked, "Do you need to go to the post office? It will take one or two hours—that's impossible." Our ill-tempered gentleman, thoroughly enraged, burst out shouting, "Your grandmother!" At this our boatman flared up, "What? Mother? Mother? What mother, don't say mother!" We thought the sahib was surely about to be thrown into the sea; the boatman asked again, "What did say?" The sahib did not soften his tone in the least. He said again, "Your grandmother!" Now there was truly no escape—the boatman blazed up furiously. Seeing the situation was not favourable, the sahib grew mild and said, "You don't seem to understand what I

say!" That is, he was now busy trying to prove that saying "grandmother" was not an insult. At this the boatman, abandoning English altogether, shouted a stern rebuke: "Bas—chup!" (Enough—silence!) The sahib, taken aback, fell silent, and his flow of words dried up. Going on a little further, the sahib asked, "How much further is it?" The boatman, blazing with fury, shouted, "Two shilling give, ask what distance!" We gathered from this that for a fare of two shillings, such questions were not permitted in the kingdom of Suez! While the boatman was thus rebuking us, the other oarsmen were finding it vastly amusing; they kept exchanging glances and snickering among themselves. Seeing the boatman's foul temper, they had a hard time controlling their laughter. With the boatman scolding from one side and the oarsmen sniggering from the other, we three, finding no other way to vent our own irritation at the boatman, joined in the laughter ourselves—such cleverness often has to be pressed into service in difficult straits. In due course we reached the town of Suez. I have no right to say much about the town of Suez, for I saw no more than half a mile of it. I had a wish to make a circuit of the town, but my fellow travellers who had seen Suez before said, "This exertion promises nothing but fatigue and irritation, with no other fruit to be gained." That did not discourage me, but then I heard that there was no way to see the town except by riding a donkey. Hearing this, my inclination to see the town diminished considerably; and afterward it was reported that the donkeys of this country do not always agree in temperament with their drivers—the donkey too has an independent will of its own; hence at times a conflict of two wills arises, but it is generally seen that the donkey's will emerges victorious in the end. In Suez, a certain vile eye-disease is extremely prevalent—you may see hundreds of people in the street afflicted with that very disease. The flies of this place carry the disease about everywhere; drawing the seeds of the disease from infected eyes, they go and settle upon uninfected eyes, and thus the disease spreads on all sides. At Suez we boarded the railway carriage. This railway carriage has many faults—first, there is no arrangement for sleeping, since the seats are divided into separate compartments; second, such a slow, crawling train as this is not to be seen everywhere. The train ran the whole night; when we woke in the daytime we found that we were not merely covered with dust—everything else had happened to us too. Putting my hand to my hair, I found such a layer of soil had gathered there that one could easily grow rice upon my head. In this dust-smeared ascetic's guise, we arrived at Alexandria. On either side of the rail line lay green cropfields. Here and there, date

palms stood laden with clusters of dates. Amid the fields, wells here and there. Here and there a few farmhouses—square buildings, without roof-ridge, without verandah—the whole structure like a wall, with one or two windows set into that very wall. For all these reasons, the buildings seemed to have no beauty of form. However, I had earlier imagined all of Africa, from head to foot, as barren desert; seeing the surroundings, nothing of that impression remained. Rather, the dawn seemed to me most delightful, spread over those green fields amid the date-palm groves.

At the port of Alexandria the steamer "Mongolia" awaited us. Now we ascended upon the breast of the Mediterranean Sea. I began to feel a slight chill. On boarding the ship I bathed very thoroughly—dust had penetrated into my very bones. After bathing, I went to see the town of Alexandria. A boat was hired to take us from the ship to the wharf. The boatmen here are veritable second editions of Sir William Jones—they can converse fluently in Greek, Italian, French, English, and many other languages. I heard that French is the common language here. The names of streets, the signboards, and the shop-names are mostly written in French. The town of Alexandria seemed to me a prosperous place. There is no telling how many races of people and how many kinds of shops and markets exist here. The streets are paved with stone and kept quite clean, but the noise of carriages is rather excessive. Very large buildings, very large shops—the town is quite splendid indeed. The port of Alexandria is very large. Ships of many nations find shelter here. European, Muslim—ships of every nation are present in this port, except that there are no ships belonging to Hindus.

In four or five days we reached Italy; it must have been one or two o'clock at night. Abandoning our warm beds, taking our belongings, we went up on the ship's deck. It was a moonlit night, very cold; I had no proper warm clothing, so I felt the cold keenly. Before us lay a silent town, all the windows and doors of the buildings shut—all wrapped in sleep. Great confusion arose among our passengers—sometimes we heard the train could be caught, sometimes that it could not. No one could decide what to do with the luggage; whether to stay aboard or disembark remained entirely uncertain. An Italian officer came and began counting us—but why he had begun counting, none could fathom. A vague rumour spread among the ship's passengers that this counting had some particular connection with our boarding the train. But that night, in the end, no train was to be had at all. We heard

that the next day, before three o'clock, no train would be available. The passengers grew thoroughly vexed. In the end, we had to take shelter that night at a hotel in Brindisi.

This, then, was my first step upon European soil. Before coming to any new country, I keep it in mind as so novel that on arriving, it scarcely seems novel at all. Everyone was astonished to hear that Europe did not seem so very new to me.

We arrived at the Brindisi hotel at three in the morning and went straight to bed. In the morning we set out to see the town, riding in a half-dead horse and half-broken carriage. What a mismatch of coachman and equipage—words fail me! The coachman must have been fourteen years old—but the horse must have been fifty—and the carriage seemed to belong to the mythological age. Brindisi is like any small town. There were a few farmhouses, shops and markets, streets. Beggars were returning from begging, two or three men sat in a wine-shop chatting, two or three stood at a street corner laughing and joking; the townsfolk moved about with utterly carefree faces, walking with the gait of elephants; it seemed as if no one had any work, no one had any worry—as if the whole town were on holiday. There was no bustle of carriages in the street, no crowd of people. We had gone only a short distance when a boy stopped our carriage and, holding a watermelon in hand, sat down beside the coachman. Mr. B—— remarked, "He has some desire to earn something without effort." The fellow, extending his hand this way and that, began pointing things out to us: "That's a church, that's a garden, that's a garden, that's a field," and so on. His commentary added not one whit to our knowledge, nor would the lack of his commentary have diminished it in the least. No one had told him to climb onto our carriage, no one had asked him anything, yet even so this unsolicited favour had to be repaid. They took us to an orchard. There, the varieties of fruit trees were beyond counting. On every side, clusters of grapes hung ripe. There were two kinds of grapes, black and white; of these, the black ones I found sweeter. On great trees, apples, peaches, and many other kinds of fruit hung ripening. An old woman (presumably the garden-keeper) came forward bearing some fruits. We paid her no attention; but she knew perfectly well how to sell fruit. We were wandering about here and there when suddenly a lovely girl appeared before us bearing an assortment of fruits and a bouquet of flowers, and then there was no possibility of refusing.

The girls of Italy are very lovely to look at. They bear something of the look of the women of our own country. Fair complexion, dark black hair, dark eyebrows, dark eyes, and features of exquisite form.

At three o'clock we left Brindisi by train. The vineyards on either side of the railway route were splendid to behold. Mountains, rivers, lakes, cottages, cropfields, small villages, and the rest—all that is the stuff of poets' dreams adorned every side. From within the trees, when some distant town would gradually come into view, its palace-spires, its church-steeple, its picture-like houses—it was most pleasing to behold. In the evening, beneath a mountain, I saw a most beautiful lake, which I shall never forget—the trees all about it, the evening shadow upon the water was so lovely that I do not wish to attempt its description.

Travelling by rail, we saw the famous tunnel of Mont Cenis. From this side of the mountain the French, and from that side the Italians, began digging simultaneously; digging for several years, the two teams of engineers finally met exactly midway, face to face with each other. It took the train fully half an hour to pass through this cave. In that darkness we felt almost suffocated. In the trains here, daylight lamps are kept lit at all times, because at nearly every mile, roughly every five minutes, one must pass through a mountain tunnel—so very little daylight is available. From Italy to France, the whole journey—waterfalls, rivers, mountains, villages, lakes—we forgot the fatigue of travel in the seeing of them.

We reached Paris in the morning. What a splendid city! One is overwhelmed by the forest of sky-piercing palaces. One feels that in Paris, surely, there can be no poor people at all. It seemed that for these three-and-a-half-foot-tall human beings, such vast, magnificent buildings could hardly be necessary. We went to the hotel—such vast, grand construction that just as one feels uncomfortable wearing loose garments, one feels somewhat uneasy even in such a hotel. One is left amazed by the marble pillars, the fountains, the gardens, the palaces, the stone-paved streets, the carriages, the horses, the throng of people. Upon reaching Paris, we went straight to a "Turkish bath." First we went and sat in a very hot room; after remaining there a while, some began to sweat, but I did not sweat at all, so they took me to another, still hotter room; that room was like a furnace—if you kept your eyes open, they would begin to sting; after some minutes I could not bear to stay there any longer, and on coming out I began to sweat profusely. After that,

they took me somewhere and laid me down. A gigantic man came and began kneading my whole body. His entire body was bare; such magnificently muscled physique I had never seen before. "Vyudhoraska vrishaskandhah shalapransumahabhujah" (broad-chested, bull-shouldered, tall as a sal tree, mighty-armed)—I thought to myself that there was no need for such a massive cannon to crush this puny mosquito. He looked at me and remarked that I was fairly tall in build, and that if I broadened out a bit sideways, I would count as a handsome man;

For half an hour he kneaded my entire body relentlessly; all the dust I had accumulated since being born seemed to lift right off my skin. Having thoroughly kneaded me, he took me into yet another room; there, with hot water, soap, and sponge, he scrubbed my body thoroughly clean. When this cleansing rite was finished, he took me into another room. There, with a great syringe, he poured hot water over my body; suddenly he stopped the hot water and began pouring water cold as ice; thus bathing alternately in hot and cold, I went into a kind of water-apparatus, from which, from above and below and all sides, water pierced my body like arrows. In the midst of that ice-cold barrage of Varuna's watery arrows, I felt after a while as if the very blood in my chest were congealing—I had to sound the retreat, and came out panting. After that, there was something like a pool in one place; he asked whether I was willing to swim. I did not swim; my companion did. Watching him swim, they began saying to each other, "Look, look, how strangely he swims, just like a dog." At this point the bathing was over. I realized that a Turkish bath and a proper laundering of the body are two very different things. After that, we hired a carriage for the entire day for one pound. We went to see the Paris Exhibition. You may now be pricking up your ears eagerly, thinking I am about to describe the Paris Exhibition in detail. But I must confess, to my sorrow, that though I saw the whole of the Paris Exhibition, I saw it about as thoroughly as one learns knowledge at Calcutta University—that is, not thoroughly at all. We stayed in Paris no more than a single day—such a vast enterprise cannot be seen properly by anyone in a single day. We saw it the whole day—but seeing it that way only whets one's thirst to see it, without actually seeing it. It is a city unto itself. Only by staying a month could one dare attempt to describe it. I retain in memory a general impression of massive scale from the Paris Exhibition, but no ordered impression at all. Generally I recall that I went into a picture gallery and saw

countless, countless wonderful paintings; went into a sculpture hall and saw countless, countless statues; saw all manner of things from all manner of countries—but nothing particular remains with me. After that we went from Paris to London—such a gloomy, dark city I had never seen before—smoke, cloud, rain, fog, mud, and the hurried, harried look of the people. I stayed in London only an hour or two; when I left London, I breathed a sigh of relief and felt I had survived. My friends told me that one does not fall in love with London at first sight; one must know it well over some time before one can appreciate London's charm.

THE SECOND LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Before coming to England, I had foolishly hoped that in this tiny island, of scarcely two hands' breadth of land, everywhere one would find Gladstone's eloquence, Max Müller's scriptural exegesis, Tyndall's scientific insight, Carlyle's profound thought, Bain's disquisitions on philosophy pouring from every mouth. Fortunately, I have been disappointed in this. The women are engrossed in dress, the men are engaged in their work, society carries on as it does everywhere; only on political matters does one hear a particular clamour. The women ask each other whether you went dancing, how the concert was, that a new actor has come to the theatre, that there will be a band playing at such-and-such a place tomorrow, and so on. The men will say: what do you think of the Afghan war, the Londoners entertained the Marquis of Lorne handsomely, today's weather is quite fine, yesterday's was rather miserable. The women of this country play the piano, sing, warm themselves by the fire, recline on the sofa reading novels, converse with visitors, and, whether necessary or not, flirt with young men. The perpetual spinsters of this country are busy people. Whatever the din of temperance meetings, working-men's societies, and other such institutions, their voices are present in all of them. They need not go to office like the men, nor raise children like the women; and perhaps by this age it is no longer fitting for them to spend their time dancing or flirting at balls, so they are able to accomplish a great deal, from which some benefit may perhaps also arise.

Here, wine-shops stand at every door. As I walk down the street I see shoe shops, tailor shops, meat shops, toy shops at every step, but bookshops I hardly ever see. We needed to buy a book of poetry, but not finding a bookshop nearby, we had to order the book from a toy-seller—I had previously believed that just as a butcher's shop is abundantly necessary in this country, so too would be bookshops.

Upon coming to England, what strikes the eye of everyone before anything else is people's hurried busyness. It is amusing to watch the faces of those walking along the streets—umbrella tucked under the arm, rushing headlong, paying no heed to those beside them, faces bearing an expression of great anxiety, as if their whole striving is that time should not slip past and escape them. All of London runs on railways. Every five minutes a train departs. Coming from London to Brighton, I saw

that every single moment a train was rushing by—overhead, below, alongside—rushing from all four directions at once. Those trains had the very appearance of London's people, dashing hither and thither in a great flurried hurry. The country is merely this one speck, and one grows nervous walking even two steps for fear of falling into the sea, yet here there are so many trains that I cannot fathom why. We once, by mischance, missed a train going to London, but we did not have to go back home on that account—another train arrived within half an hour.

The people of this country are not nature's spoiled children; no one has the option of resting propped on a pillow with oil rubbed into his nose. First of all, in this country, unlike ours, mere scratching of the soil does not yield crops—one must wrestle with winter for it. Besides, one cannot even calculate how much clothing is required against the assault of winter here; further, eating little offers no means of survival in this country—much food is required merely to generate warmth in the body. Clothing, coal, and food, if not present in ample quantity, will not sustain a person here, and on top of that there is drink to reckon with. Our Bengal's food is meagre, and our clothing likewise. In this country, whoever has the strength can hold his head up; the weak find no mercy here—for this is a war with nature, and in the field of action a thousand rivalries confront one face to face.

Gradually I began forming acquaintance with one or two people here. I notice one amusing thing—the people here regard me as thoroughly ignorant.

One day I went out walking with Dr. —'s brother. There were some photographs in front of a shop; he took me there and began explaining photography to me—explaining that such pictures are made using a certain kind of apparatus, not drawn by human hand. People gathered around me on every side. Taking me before a watch-shop, he tried to impress upon my mind what a wondrous instrument a watch was. At an evening party, a Miss — asked me whether I had ever heard the sound of a piano before this. Many people of this country could perhaps draw a map of the netherworld, but do they know even one iota about India? They cannot even imagine that any difference exists between England and any other country. Never mind India—there is no limit to how much the ordinary people here do not know.

THE THIRD LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

We went that day to a fancy-dress ball, that is, a masquerade—so many women and men had gone there dressed up in all sorts of costumes. A huge room, ablaze with gaslight, a band playing on every side—six or seven hundred handsome men and beautiful women. "There was no room to place even a mustard seed" in the room—one might well call it a fair of moon-faced beauties. In room after room, groups of men and women, hand in hand, whirling round and round in dance, like pairs of lunatics. In one room seventy or eighty couples were so crowded together, so jostling one another, that one could not tell whose shoulder one leaned upon. In one room a veritable Kurukshetra of champagne had broken out—liquor and food strewn everywhere, a crowd of people; one girl's dancing seemed to know no rest, for two or three hours together her feet kept moving continuously. One lady had come dressed as a snow-maiden—all in white, her whole body adorned with beaded ornaments glittering in the light. Another lady had come dressed as a Muslim woman: a red, full pantaloons, over it a silk peshwaz, on her head something like a cap—this costume suited her rather well. Another had come dressed as one of our native women, a sari and a bodice her chief attire, with a shawl over it, which made her look far better than English clothing would have. Another had dressed as an English maidservant. I had dressed as a Bengali zamindar, wearing gold-embroidered velvet garments and a gold-embroidered velvet turban. Among us, one particular gentleman had dressed as a taluqdar of Oudh, adorned in white silk pantaloons studded with embroidery, a white silk coat, white silk slippers, a turban glittering with gold thread, and a waistband of gold thread. Whether the taluqdars of Oudh actually dress this way or not, there was no possibility of anyone catching him out on the point. Among us, one gentleman had dressed as an Afghan general.

Last Tuesday we went to a dance at the house of a certain gentleman. When invited somewhere in the evening, one usually wears thick clothing for the cold, but at evening parties and the like, it is customary to wear thin black woollen garments. The evening dress-shirt must be spotlessly, dazzlingly white, and over it a black woollen waistcoat cut open almost to the chest, so that the white front of the shirt shows through the black waistcoat; a white necktie about the throat; and over everything, a tail-coat—the front of the tail-coat is cut away to the waist, unlike our

long coats and the like, which extend to the knee. The front edge of this garment extends only to the waist, but the back is not cut, so it hangs down somewhat like a tail. In imitation of the English, one must wear this tail-coat. To go to a dance-party, one must wear a pair of white gloves on the hands, because since one must hold hands with the ladies while dancing, bare hands touching theirs might soil their hands, or, if they are wearing gloves, might soil the gloves. When shaking hands with ladies elsewhere, one must remove one's gloves, but in the dance-room it is quite the opposite.

However that may be, we arrived at their house at about half past nine. The dancing had not yet begun. The lady of the house stood near the door of the room; she was shaking hands with those she knew particularly well, and bowing her head to those she did not know, welcoming everyone. In this land of these foreigners, the host of a dinner-party holds no very exalted position; whether he is present in the gathering or asleep in his bedroom, it hardly matters to anyone. We entered the room; the room was brilliant with gaslight, hundreds of women's beauty rendering the gaslight itself dim by comparison; it was a festival of beauty spread before us, and upon entering the room one's eyes were dazzled at once. On one side of the room a piano, a violin, a flute were playing; couches and chairs arranged all around the room; here and there the gaslight and the reflection of beauty fell upon the mirrors on the walls, glittering. The floor of the dance-room was wooden, with no carpet or the like spread over it—that wooden floor was so polished that one's feet would slip. The more slippery the floor, the more suitable for dancing, because on a slippery floor the motion of the dance comes easily, the feet meet no obstruction, and slide of their own accord. Around the sides of the room, wherever there was something like a verandah, it had been screened off a little with plants, and one or two couches or chairs placed there, and this had been given the name "the lovers' bower." There, tired from dancing or wearied of the noise, young men and women could remain absorbed in intimate conversation undisturbed. On entering the room, everyone was given a card printed in gold letters, on which was written what dances would take place. English dances may be divided into two categories: one kind consists of men and women together, revolving round and round in dance, in which only two people dance together at a time; another kind of dance has four couples of dancers standing facing each other in a square formation, and moving about with various steps while holding hands—sometimes, instead of four couples,

there are as many as eight. The revolving kind is called round dance, and the moving-about kind is called square dance. Before the dancing begins, the hostess introduces the men and women to each other—that is, she takes a male guest by the arm to some female guest and says, "Miss So-and-so, this is Mr. So-and-so." Immediately the miss and the mister bow their heads. After making acquaintance with some miss, if one wishes to dance, one must take out that gold-printed programme from one's pocket and ask her, "Are you engaged for such-and-such dance?" If she says "no," then one must say, "Then may I have the pleasure of dancing with you?" If she says "Thank you," it is understood that one is fortunate enough to have the pleasure of dancing with her. Then one must write one's name beside that dance on her card, and her name on one's own card.

The dance began. Round-round-round. In one room, imagine, forty or fifty couples dancing; jostling, brushing against each other, sometimes couples colliding with couples. Yet still round-round-round. The music playing to the rhythm, feet falling to the rhythm, the room growing hot. One dance ended, the music stopped; the gentleman dancer led his tired lady companion to the refreshment room, where fruits, sweets, and cordials were arranged upon a table; perhaps they ate and drank, or perhaps the two of them sat in the secluded bower engaging in whispered conversation. I cannot mix easily with new people, and even a dance in which I am perfectly proficient, I cannot dance with new people. To speak truly, I do not much care for dance introductions at all. With those with whom I have particular acquaintance, I do not mind dancing. Just as, when playing cards, if one gets a poor partner, one's team becomes vexed, so too when dancing, if she gets a poor partner, the lady becomes quite vexed. My dance-partner, I believe, secretly wished for my death while we were dancing. The dance finished, I breathed a sigh of relief and survived; she too found her peace.

When I first entered the dance-room, I was quite startled to see that among hundreds of fair-skinned women, one Indian dark-skinned woman of our own land was present. Seeing her, my heart leapt within me at once. I became eager to converse with her somehow. How many days since I had seen a dark face! And in her face there was that soft, gentle quality of our Bengali women. I have seen a gentle, kindly expression on the faces of many English women, but I cannot say what particular difference there was in hers. Her hair was tied in the manner of our country. Seeing that white complexion and that fierce, unrestrained beauty day

after day, my mind had grown inwardly weary—only now did I understand this. Whatever else, English women are of an entirely different race; I have not learned English manners well enough to converse quite freely and openly with them. Familiarity dares not overstep the bounds of propriety.

Today, after much penance on Brighton's part, the sun has risen. In this country, the day the sun emerges from the interior of the clouds, not a single person remains indoors. That day the road by the seaside swarms with people out walking. Though there is no "purdah" here, still the women of this country are not as untouched by sunlight as ours are.

Before half past eight we do not rise from bed; if one rises at six o'clock, people here are astonished. After rising, I bathe daily in cold water. What is called bathing here, I do not perform such an elaborate morning ritual. I pour water over my head and bathe—not hot water, this ice-cold water of the place. At nine our breakfast arrives. Nine here equals six there. Our other meal is at half past one, and that is the chief meal—the midday meal. In between, tea and bread arrive once, and then at eight at night another substantial meal is arranged; thus our day's chief divisions revolve around eating.

Darkness is falling, it is four o'clock, and once it strikes four one may as well light a lamp before reading. Here the day truly begins at nine, for generally one does not rise before eight. And then, again, by four in the afternoon the daylight fades entirely. The days seem to come to work like clerks, from ten to four. Between the opening and closing of a pocket-watch's case, the day here slips away. The night here comes on horseback, so to speak, and departs on foot.

Cloud, rain, storm, darkness, cold—these never leave for even a moment here. When it rains in our country, there is the sound of torrential rain, cloud, thunder, lightning, storm—there is a certain exhilaration in it; here it is not so, it drizzles steadily, that monotonous rain going on continuously with unbroken, noiseless footsteps. In the street, the white, leafless trees stand motionless, getting soaked, drop by drop the water sprinkles upon the glass windowpanes. In our country, clouds gather layer upon layer; here the sky is flat—one does not feel that clouds have gathered, one feels rather that for some reason the sky's colour has become muddled, the whole thing wrapped in a weary, exhausted look, like a widow's countenance. Sometimes we hear people say that yesterday thunder rumbled, but

the thunder itself lacks such power of voice that we can catch the news from its own mouth. The sun here has become a matter of rumour. If, by great good fortune, I rise in the morning and manage to see the sun's face, then instantly I think again—

"Such a day will not last forever, you know."

Day by day the cold is drawing closer; people say that tomorrow or the day after we may see it snow. The thermometer has fallen to thirty degrees—that is the freezing point. A little frost has already appeared. The soil of the road has become very hard.

Because whatever water was in it has all frozen solid. Here and there in the road, dew has hardened like bits of glass, very solidly frozen. In one or two places, someone seems to have scattered lime among the grass—this is the first sign of snow. It has grown very cold; sometimes one's hands and feet become so cold that they begin to burn with pain. In the morning it takes courage to leave the warmth of the quilt.

Seeing our native dress, some people in the street genuinely burst out laughing, while others are so astonished that they lose all capacity for laughter. How many people have narrowly escaped being run over by carriages on our account! In Paris, behind our carriage, a group of schoolboys ran along shouting; we saluted them. Some laughed in our faces, others kept shouting—"Jack, look at the blackies!"

THE FOURTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

We went that day to the House of Commons. The sky-piercing spire of the Parliament building, the vast structure, the yawning rooms leave one dumbstruck. The House sits in one great chamber; around it runs a circular gallery, on one side of which sit spectators, on the other side reporters of newspapers. The gallery is rather like a theatre's dress-circle. Below the gallery sit the members on stools. For them there are, on two sides, ten benches each. On one side's five benches sits the government party, on the other side's five, the opposition. Upon the platform in front there is a chair, where the presiding officer (called the Speaker) sits, wearing a wig upon his head, in an attitude of great gravity. If anyone at any time behaves improperly or does something contrary to the rules, the Speaker rises to check him. Behind where the newspaper reporters sit, in a gallery screened with lattice-work, is the place for women; from outside they cannot be seen. When we went, an Irish member named Ojedanel was delivering a speech concerning India; he was agitating about the Press Act and various other matters. His motion was rejected. I was astonished at the general temper of the House. When one member is speaking, perhaps many other members will be shouting "Hear, hear! Hear, hear!" and laughing. Even schoolboys at our public gatherings would probably not behave this way. Often, while a speech is being made, members will be tilting their hats down over their foreheads and dozing off for no particular reason. Once I saw that during a speech concerning India, there were no more than nine or ten members in the chamber; everyone else had gone outside for air or to supper; and the moment it was time to vote, everyone came pouring in from all sides at once. I did not get the impression that anyone's opinion was ever settled by hearing a speech or any kind of argument.

Last Thursday there was great debate in the House of Commons regarding India. That day Bright submitted petitions from Indians regarding the Civil Service, Gladstone submitted petitions regarding the cotton tariff and the Afghan war. Parliament opens at four o'clock. Several of us Bengalis arrived at the House before four had struck. The House had not yet opened; visitors were standing in a great room outside the House. Around the room stood statues of political luminaries—Burke, Fox, Chatham, Walpole, and others. At every door stood a guard wearing an

old-fashioned powdered wig. Gowned officials of Parliament moved to and fro with papers in hand. At four o'clock the House opened. We had tickets for the Speaker's gallery. The House of Commons has five categories of gallery—Strangers' Gallery, Speaker's Gallery, Diplomatic Gallery, Reporters' Gallery, Ladies' Gallery. From any member of the House one may obtain a ticket to the foreign visitors' gallery, but only through a speaker's favour can one obtain a ticket to the speaker's own gallery. I cannot say very well what the diplomatic gallery is like, for on the several occasions I have gone to the House, I have never seen more than one or two people there. From the Strangers' Gallery one cannot see very well; in front of it is the Speaker's Gallery; in front of that, the Diplomatic Gallery. We went in and sat down. The wigged Speaker mounted his throne like an eagle upon its perch. The members of the House took their seats. Business began. The first order of business in the House is question time. In a previous session of the House, a member states that "next time I shall put such-and-such question, and it must be answered." That day, an Irish member named Ojedanel asked whether the government had received any information regarding the account, published in *The Echo* and one or two other newspapers, of atrocities by English soldiers against the Zulus, and whether such atrocities were not unbecoming to Christians? Immediately, from the government's side, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach rose and gave Ojedanel a couple of sharp words, whereupon, one after another, all the Irish members present rose and gave equally sharp replies. After a good deal of such squabbling, both sides settled down again. Once the business of question-and-answer was over, when the time came for speeches, most of the members got up and left the House. After one or two speeches, Bright rose and submitted a great pile of Civil Service petitions to the House. Old Bright inspires deep respect to look at—his face seems to bear the very stamp of generosity and kindness. Unfortunately, Bright did not deliver any speech that day. Very few members remained in the House; among those present, many were preparing for sleep, when Gladstone rose. The moment Gladstone rose, the whole chamber fell utterly silent; hearing Gladstone's voice, members gradually began streaming in from outside, and both sides' benches filled up. Then Gladstone's speech poured forth like a full fountain. There was no shouting, no bombast in it at all, and yet every word of his could be heard perfectly clearly by every person seated anywhere in the room. Gladstone has a certain firmness of tone in speaking such that every word of his seems to force conviction into the listener's very mind. When emphasizing a point, he clenches his fist and leans

forward with his whole body. It seems as though he is wringing out each word entirely. And each such emphasized word, breaking down doors, seems to force its way into the mind. Gladstone speaks continuously, but every word of his carries weight—no part of it is empty; he does not speak from beginning to end of his address with equal forced emphasis, because such forced speaking would naturally make listeners' minds rise up against him. Whichever point he considers necessary to emphasize, that point he does emphasize; he speaks with great vigour, but he does not shout, and one feels that whatever he is saying carries his own deep, sincere conviction.

Just as Gladstone's speech ended, the House became nearly empty; on both sides' benches there remained no more than six or seven people. When Somerlot rose to speak after Gladstone, there was practically no one at all on either side's benches; but he was not one to give up easily, and addressing the empty House, he delivered an extremely long speech. In that interval I took an extremely long nap. The one or two members who were present either chatted with each other or, pulling their hats over their eyes, dreamt of becoming Prime Minister after Disraeli's fall. The Irish members are a great nuisance in the House; when they rise to speak, a tremendous uproar begins from every side, and the members, like a flock of geese, keep shouting "Hear! Hear!" With the mocking cry of "Here! Here!" the speaker's voice gets drowned out. Faced with such interruption, the speaker can no longer control himself, grows furious, and the angrier he becomes, the more ridiculous he appears. The Irish members, having been thus tormented, have of late begun taking their revenge. Whatever subject comes up in the House, on almost every matter they raise objections, and to every proposal, one after another rises and troubles the House with lengthy speeches.

THE FIFTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

What strikes the eyes of Bengalis newly arrived in England, how newcomers first appear when mixing into English society—on these matters I shall not, for the present, say much from my own experience. For I have no right to judge such things; those who had been in England a long time before and who know England very well have brought me along with them, and it is with them that I have been living. Even before coming to England, I heard a great deal about it from them, and so, having arrived here, very little has seemed genuinely new to me. In mixing with the people here, I have not had to learn manners by stumbling at every step. So I think I shall not, for the present, tell you much of my own experience. Rather, I shall write to you what I have heard from the mouths of one or two Bengalis here.

They boarded the ship. Aboard ship, many English servants are kept for the passengers' service; the first confusion arises with these very people. Many of our countrymen address them as "sir, sir," and feel awkward giving them orders to do anything. On board ship, they remained extremely diffident. They say that this diffidence, felt on every subject, was not due merely to fear—there was, mixed with it, a certain shame as well. Whatever task they went to perform, they felt as if they might blunder into some impropriety. Aboard ship, one does not easily grow familiar with Englishmen. They come fresh from India, where these "lord and master" types, on seeing a native, turn up their noses and walk away with heads averted. Now and then you will find a gentlemanly Englishman who, seeing you utterly friendless, will try to befriend you—he is truly a gentleman, that is, a gentleman of high, cultivated family. As for those "John-Jones-Thomases" who swarm in every alley here—in whatever district of India they set foot, in household after household their name becomes a terror; on whatever road they ride their horse, whip in hand (perhaps that whip is not solely for the horse's benefit), the whole street clears in fear before them, and at their slightest gesture the throne of some king of India might tremble—given such circumstances, the distortion of character that results in them does not, I think, seem to me particularly unnatural. Give the reins of a horse to a man who has never driven a horse before, and he will thrash the horse mercilessly with the whip; he does not know that a slight pull on the rein alone would suffice to guide it. But now and then one finds a certain

gentleman-sahib who, even from within this virulently contagious disease of Anglo-Indianness, remains untainted, who, having gained unchallenged power and authority, does not grow arrogant and haughty. Living in India, with social restraints dissolved, surrounded by a thousand servants—it is a fiery trial for a refined and gentle mind.

Well, by this time the ship has arrived at Southampton. The Bengali passengers have reached England. They proceeded toward London. On alighting from the train, an English porter appeared. He asked politely what they needed and how he might help. He put their luggage down, called a carriage, and they thought to themselves, "My, how gentlemanly the English are!" That Englishmen could be so gentlemanly had not occurred to them before. They did have to press a shilling into his hand, though. Well, a newly arrived young Bengali gentleman may well spend a whole shilling needlessly for receiving a single salute from any random white man. Those from whom I hear all this account have been in England for many years now; what they first thought upon seeing various small things in England, they do not now clearly recall. But those matters which particularly struck them at the time, they still remember.

Before their arrival in England, their English friends there had arranged and prepared rooms for them. Entering the room, they saw a carpet spread on the floor, pictures hung on the walls, a large mirror hanging in one spot, a couch, several chairs, one or two glass vases, and in one corner a small piano. What a calamity! They called their friends and said, "Have we come here to play the great lord? We haven't much money, my friend, we cannot afford to stay in such a room!" Their friends found this vastly amusing, for by then they had entirely forgotten that they themselves, long ago, had once undergone this very same experience. Regarding the newcomers as utterly ignorant, penniless folk, they said in a most knowing tone, "All the rooms here are exactly like this!" The newcomer imagined that in our country, in that damp, musty room, with a plank laid down and a mat over it, a hookah lying around here and there, a bit of cloth wrapped about the waist, shoes taken off, two or three people together playing at a game of chess, a cow tethered in the courtyard, cow-dung plastered on the wall, wet clothes drying from the verandah, and so on. They say that in the very first days, sitting on chairs, lying on couches, eating at tables, walking upon carpets caused them extreme discomfort. They would sit stiffly, edgewise, upon the sofa, in fear lest the sofa be soiled or

come to some harm. It seemed that the sofas were kept there purely for decorating the room; it could never be the master's intention that these things be used and dirtied by actual use. Such was the state of mind upon first entering the room—and then there is one more important matter to relate.

In England, in smaller houses, there exists perhaps some being called a "landlord," but for those who reside in the house, it is with the "landlady" alone that all dealings lie. Settling rent, arranging any sort of understanding, arranging for meals—all such matters are with the landlady. When my friend first arrived, he saw an Englishwoman come and greet him most politely with "good morning"; utterly flustered, he returned the greeting with appropriate courtesy and stood there stiffly. But when he saw that his other Anglo-Bengali friends were conversing with her in the most unselfconscious tone, his astonishment knew no bounds. Imagine—a living English lady, wearing shoes, wearing a hat, wearing a gown! At that point the newly arrived Bengali youth developed a certain reverence for his Anglo-Bengali friends—that these fearless, worldly men should ever gain such boldness of heart seemed to him utterly impossible. However that may be, having thus established the newcomers properly, the Anglo-Bengali friends went off to their own residences and, for a whole week, made ample sport of their ignorance. The aforementioned landlady would come every day, most politely, to ask what was wanted and what was not wanted. They say this occasion gave them enormous pleasure. One of them said that the first day he managed to scold this English girl a little, his mood remained exceedingly cheerful the whole day long. Yet that day the sun did not rise in the west, nor did mountains go wandering about, nor did fire attain coolness.

They lived happily enough in their carpeted rooms. They say, "In our country, there was no such separate thing as one's own private room; whatever room one sat in, ten members of the household would pass through it constantly. I would be writing on one side, elder brother would be sitting on another with a book, while on yet another side, on a spread mat, the tutor would be loudly reciting lessons in a singsong voice to little Bhulu. Here I have my own room; I have arranged my books conveniently on one side, kept my writing materials tidy on another, with no fear that some day five boys will come and turn everything topsy-turvy, or that another day I shall return from college at two o'clock to find three books missing, and after much searching discover that my little niece has taken the books to show pictures

to her tiny playmates. Here one sits alone in one's own room, the door shut, and no one comes bursting in without so much as a by-your-leave; before entering the room, one knocks; the children do not fill the place with shouting and crying on every side—everything quiet, private, no commotion at all." Regarding their homeland, their temper grows quite irritable. It is generally observed that the men of our country do not mix very well with the male society here. Because to mix in male society here, one needs a certain robust liveliness of manner; it does not do to sit stiffly, giving two or three hesitant "yes-no" answers in a soft tone. The Bengali guest, at the dinner table, may whisper sweet little scraps of conversation into the ear of the lady seated beside him in a soft, gentle tone, and from that lady's company he may derive such heavenly pleasure that it manifests itself from the hair of his head to the tips of his boots—so in the society of women, Bengalis may well win favour. In our country, from behind the veil-shaded, moon-faced, unilluminated inner apartments, coming into the free moonlight of beauty here, the moon-loving heart of ours opens and sings.

One day our newly arrived Bengali youth went to his first dinner invitation. In social gatherings, the foreigner is greatly honoured. He took the arm of the young daughter of the host, a Miss So-and-so, and went to sit at the dining table. We do not get to mix freely with the women of our own country, and thereafter, being newly arrived, we cannot quite understand the temperament of the women here either. Whatever conversation and pleasantries they engage in from some social requirement to entertain us, we cannot quite grasp its true meaning; we suddenly think that this particular lady's favour is directed especially at us. Our young Bengali friend told the Miss a great deal about India. He said his stay in England was extremely pleasant, that he had no wish to return to India, that India was full of all manner of superstitions. Finally, he told a story or two of his own invention. For instance, he said that he had once gone tiger-hunting in the Sunderbans and had narrowly escaped death. The Miss easily understood that this young man found her most pleasing. She was well satisfied, and her sweetest arrow-words began to pierce the young man's heart. "Ah, what charming talk! Where are the meagre 'yes' and 'no' of our country's girls' lips, so faint that they dissolve within the boundary of the veil itself; and where is this abundant nectar-stream flowing here unbidden from lips like a chalice, entering vein after vein like wine!"

You perhaps now understand what combination of ingredients gradually transforms a substance called "Bengali" into a hodgepodge called "Anglo-Bengali." I have not been able to describe the entire process in detail. The aggregate of so many small matters produces such an imperceptible change in a person's mind that describing all such minutiae in detail would swell the manuscript beyond measure.

To know Anglo-Bengalis well, one must observe them in three different states. How they behave in the presence of Englishmen, how they behave in the presence of Bengalis, and how they behave in the presence of their fellow Anglo-Bengalis. Watch an Anglo-Bengali in the presence of an Englishman, and your eyes will be gladdened. Out of politeness, he bows his head at every word; when arguing, he objects most cautiously and gently, and expresses immense sorrow for having had to object at all, offering countless apologies. Whether he speaks or not, when an Anglo-Bengali sits silently before an Englishman, still his every gesture, every facial expression, displays the utmost extremity of modesty. But observe that very same person among his own kind, and you will see his true temper. One who has been in England three years holds great prestige in the eyes of one who has been there only one year. If ever a dispute arises between the "three-year" man and the "one-year" man, you will glimpse the full glory of the "three years." He speaks every word in such a manner, in such a tone, as though he has settled the matter definitively with the goddess Saraswati herself, having reached final judgment on it. Whoever objects, he tells him plainly, "You're mistaken," or sometimes, right to his face, "You're a fool."

That day someone was telling a story—that another Bengali had asked him, "What sort of work does the gentleman do?" On hearing this story, one of our Anglo-Bengali friends exclaimed with intense disgust, "Look at that, what sheer barbarity!" His attitude was as if not telling lies, not stealing, were basic rules of moral conduct—and likewise, not asking another person about his livelihood was one of those same basic rules.

That day, in one place, the topic of our country's shraddha (funeral rites) came up—that after the death of one's father or mother we observe restrictions on food and dress, and so on. Hearing this, an Anglo-Bengali youth said to me impatiently, "Surely, sir, you do not approve of such practices." I said, "Why not? I notice that if Englishmen were to eat restricted food on the occasion of a relative's death, and

our countrymen did not, then out of not eating such restricted food, your contempt for our countrymen would double, and you would think that it is precisely because they do not eat restricted food that our country is in such a wretched state." You perhaps know that Englishmen consider it unlucky for thirteen people to eat at one table—they believe that if this happens, one of them will surely die within a year. When an Anglo-Bengali issues invitations, he somehow never invites exactly thirteen people; if asked, he says, "I myself do not believe it, but those whom I invite might be afraid, so I am obliged to follow this custom." That day an Anglo-Bengali was forbidding a young relative of his from going out to play in the street on a Sunday. When I asked why, he said, "What will the people in the street think?"

Some Bengalis say they wish to introduce the practice of renting rooms as done here, into our own country—that is their one and only wish. Another Bengali wants to reform Bengali society—he finds the mixed dancing of men and women in English society extremely appealing. Having noticed certain general similarities between the women of our country and those of this country, he then begins fussing childishly over certain particular matters. One Anglo-Bengali complained that the women of our country cannot play the piano, and do not go to visit visitors or return visits as is done here. In this way, comparing our country with this one over every trifling matter, their irritability makes the mercury of their temper rise past the boiling point. One Anglo-Bengali, surrounded by his sympathetic friends, was saying that when he imagines that if he returns to his country, the women there will surround him and begin weeping in whimpering fashion, then he no longer wishes to return to his country at all. That is, he wants that the moment his wife sees him, she should rush forward calling him "dear darling," embrace and kiss him, and stand with her head upon his shoulder. As for whether the fork and knife should be held upside down or right-side up at the dinner table, watching their painstaking research on this subject inspires one with reverence. Which cut of coat is fashionable, whether the nobility these days wears tight trousers or loose ones, whether one eats fish after meat or meat after fish, whether one dances the waltz or the polka or the mazurka—on such matters they possess unerring information. On such trifling matters, a Bengali fusses and frets to a degree quite unlike any native of this land. If you use a knife while eating fish, an Englishman will not be particularly astonished, for he knows you are a foreigner, but an Anglo-Bengali present there will need his smelling-salts. If you drink champagne from a sherry

glass, an Anglo-Bengali will stare at you agape, as though your ignorance has jeopardized the peace and happiness of the entire world. If in the evening you wear a morning coat, he would, were he a magistrate, sentence you to solitary confinement in prison. One England-returned fellow, on seeing someone eat mutton with rice, would say, "Then why not eat it with your head?"

Another astonishing thing I have noticed is this: however much Bengalis, in the presence of Englishmen, criticize their own countrymen and their own manners and customs, not a single India-hating Anglo-Indian does the same. He himself, of his own accord, brings up the subject and jests freely about the various superstitions of India. He tells stories about how in our country there exists a sect called Vallabhacharya's followers, a kind of Vaishnava sect, and describes all their rites and rituals in great detail. To make the assembled listeners laugh, he mimics how the native dancing-girls dance, making gestures, and everyone enjoys a good laugh at this. His sincerest wish is that no one should count him among the ranks of Indians. Sahib-dressed Bengalis are fearful at every step lest they be caught as being Bengali. One Bengali was once walking down a street; another Indian came up and asked him a question or two in Hindustani; he grew furiously angry and walked off without replying. His wish was that no one, seeing him, should think that he understands Hindustani. One Anglo-Bengali has composed a "national anthem" set to a Ramprasadi tune; I have quoted a portion of this song in an earlier letter, and part of it I remember further, so I mention it again here. The author of this song is not, like Ramprasad, a worshipper of Shyama, but a devotee of Gauri. That is why he addresses Gauri, saying—

Mother, this time I shall become a sahib;
I'll set up shop with red hair, and cast off my wretched native name.
With my white hand in yours, Mother, I shall go walking in gardens
(And when I see a black face, I'll turn away calling it "darkie.")

I have already mentioned the category of landladies in England earlier. They serve the needs of the household as required. Where there are many lodgers, they keep a maidservant, or other relatives come to assist them. Many choose their rooms based on having a pretty landlady. Upon entering such a house, one grows intimate with the landlady's young daughter within days, gives her a pet nickname within two or three days, and perhaps, once a week has passed, composes a poem in her

honour and presents it to her as a gift. One day the landlady's daughter brought him a cup of tea and asked whether he wanted sugar in it. He laughed and said, "No thank you, since you've touched it with your hand, I don't think I need sugar anymore!" I know one Anglo-Bengali who used to call the maidservants of his house "elder sister" and "second sister."

I know one who held his "elder-sister" and "second-sister" maidservants in such regard that if any of them happened to be present in his room or the adjoining room, and if in that circumstance one of his Anglo-Bengali friends happened to sing or crack a joke, he would become terribly flustered and exclaim, "Hush, hush, what will Miss Emily think?" I recall that once, back home, a certain person returned from England, and we fed him a meal. While eating, he sighed and said, "This is the first time I am eating without a lady present at my dining table." One Anglo-Bengali once invited some of his friends to dinner. Several landladies and maidservants sat at the dinner table; the host, noticing that one of them had soiled clothing, requested her to go change her dress, whereupon she replied, "One who is loved is loved even in soiled clothes."

Now let me tell you of one virtue of the Anglo-Bengalis. Many who come here do not admit to being married, since naturally, in the society of young unmarried women, married men command less value. If one presents oneself as unmarried, one can take many liberties in mixing with the unmarried women here, but if they know one is married, one's unmarried companions do not permit such liberties—hence there is much advantage in presenting oneself as unmarried.

Many Anglo-Bengalis will be found who fall outside this description of mine. But I have written down, as far as I know, the general characteristics of Anglo-Bengaliness.

What state Anglo-Bengalis fall into upon returning to India—of this I have neither experience nor much to say. But what happens when, after spending some time in India, one comes back again to England, that I have observed in many. England no longer seems as pleasant to them; often they cannot understand whether England has changed, or they themselves. Formerly, even the most trivial things about England used to please them; now England's cold and England's rains no longer please them; now they do not feel sad about having to return to India. They say that formerly they used to love England's strawberries above all fruits. In fact,

among all the fruits they had ever eaten, strawberries seemed the most delicious of all. But has the taste of the strawberry changed within these few years? Now they find that many native fruits seem to them much better. Formerly, Devonshire cream pleased them so much there was no end to it, but now they find that our country's kheer is far better than that. They go to India and settle down with wife and children in domestic life, begin earning a living, and their roots settle, in a sense, into the soil of India. The mind grows somewhat slack; then, resting with feet up, enjoying the breeze of the pulled fan, if one can pass one's days somehow, one remains content. Even to enjoy pleasure and luxury in England requires a great deal of exertion. Here, to go from one room to another, there is no habit of using a carriage; one cannot manage without relying upon ten servants to move one's hands and feet. Carriage fares are extremely high, and a servant's wages are no less than three and a half rupees a month. Go to see a play; it is raining in the evening, the roads muddy; one must run a few miles with an umbrella slung over one's shoulder to arrive on time. When one still has the vigour of youthful blood, one can manage all this.

THE SIXTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Our house in Brighton is in a secluded spot near the sea. A row of some twenty or twenty-five houses, the row named Medina Village. I had at first thought it would be like a garden-house. Coming here, I found that within this "villa," in front of our house, in a plot of four or five hands' width, there are four or five saplings planted. At the door of the house hangs an iron knocker; I knocked at that very knocker, and our landlady came and opened the door for us. Compared to houses in our country, the rooms here, though long and wide, are far lower in ceiling height. All the windows are shut on every side, with no way for a breath of air to enter; only, since all the windows are of glass, light comes through. For winter, such small rooms are good—light one fire and everything grows quite warm—but still, on days when clouds darken every side, when rain drizzles down, when for three or four days together there is not a single moment's respite from cloud, rain, and darkness, on such days, sitting in a corner of this small, dark room, my mood becomes utterly spoiled, and time somehow refuses to pass. It is not just I who say this—my English acquaintances too tell me that on such days they feel a great inclination to swear (swearing is an entirely European affliction, so there is no Bengali word for it at all)—one's very mind grows irreligious. However, the rooms and doorways here are quite clean; entering the house, one cannot find dust anywhere; the floors are all covered with carpets and the like, the stairs shine spotlessly clean. If something looks unpleasant to the eye, these people cannot bear it. Making every trifling thing look pleasing is a primary necessity for them. Even mourning-dress must look attractive. What we call cleanliness, however, is a different thing altogether. People here do not rinse their mouths after eating, because rinsed water dripping from the mouth looks quite unsightly. Cleanliness is sacrificed for the sake of appearance, not achieved for its own sake. Here, given the great prevalence of coughs and colds, a spittoon is an absolute necessity in a room, but its use is considered too unsightly to be kept in the room—a handkerchief serves the whole purpose. Given the kind of cleanliness we practice, we might well keep a spittoon in the room, but we feel disgust at carrying such a repulsive object in a coat pocket. But here, the eye alone holds sway. No one will see the handkerchief, and that is enough. The hair should be neatly combed, the face and hands should look clean—there is no particular need to bathe. Here, one wears so many other garments over the shirt that the

whole shirt is not visible—only a bit shows near the chest and wrists. There is a kind of shirt where only the visible part is attached separately, so that this piece alone can be removed and sent to the laundry; the advantage of this is that when it gets dirty, there is no need to change the whole shirt—only those attached pieces need be changed. The maidservants here have an apron tied at the waist, and there is nothing they will not wipe with it; the glass plates you see shining so brightly have also been cleaned with that same all-purifying apron, yet what harm does it do—nothing looks the worse for it. The people here are not unclean, not what we in our country would call "slovenly." The lack of cleanliness we observe here is largely due to the cold. Whatever the object, we do not consider it clean unless it has been washed with water. Here it is not feasible to handle so much water. Besides, because of the cold, things here do not become dirty quickly. Here, because of the cold and the covering of the body, one's flesh does not become as unclean. Here things do not decay and rot. In all these ways, there is much convenience for cleanliness in various matters. Just as we have our own notion of cleanliness, there is also, correspondingly, a great deal of falseness in the way that cleanliness is achieved here. What do we not throw into our village ponds? Bathing in an unclean pool of water; we consider ourselves purified merely by dipping twice into the Ganges after rubbing ourselves with oil. We are, I suppose, particularly clean regarding our own bodies and matters relating to food, but we do not clean our houses and surroundings as thoroughly as we ought. We even render our homes rather unhealthy in the process.

One or two acquaintances began to form here. Dr. M—, an elderly medical practitioner. He is a genuine Englishman, to whom nothing outside of England is to his taste. To him, tiny England alone is the whole world; his imagination has never crossed the English Channel. His imagination is so limited that he cannot understand how those who do not follow the ten commandments of the Bible could have any scruples about telling lies. His chief argument is that non-Christian peoples lack moral character. Seeing some wonderful creation belonging to someone who is neither English nor Christian, he cannot fathom how such a person could possess any humanity at all. His motto is "Gladly he would learn and gladly teach," but I found that he has ample capacity for the "learning" part, but not much substance for the "teaching" part. Of the literature of his own country, he knows astonishingly little; reading a few monthly magazines, he gains a smattering of

vague knowledge every month. He cannot imagine how an Indian could possibly be educated. The women here, to keep their hands warm in winter, use a kind of round, furry object into which they thrust their hands—it is called a "muff." When I first came to England and saw this curious object, I asked Dr. M—— what that thing was. He was astonished at my ignorance. I have seen the ailments of many people here who expect that we should know every trivial detail of their society. One day I had gone to a dance; a girl asked me, "What do you think of the bride?" I asked, "Which one is the bride?" Among so many girls present, I did not know which one was the newly married bride. Hearing this, she was astonished, and said, "Couldn't you tell from the orange-blossoms in her hair?"

I made acquaintance with two Miss K——s. They are the daughters of the local vicar. Visiting families in the neighborhood, arranging for Sunday school, establishing temperance societies for the working class and going there to play music for their entertainment—these tasks keep them busy day and night. Being foreigners, they took great care of us. Whenever there was any festival or celebration in the town, they would inform us, take us along; whenever they had leisure, morning or evening, they would come and chat with us, occasionally take the boys to teach them songs, and some days we would go walking with them. In this way they took great care and affection for us. The elder Miss K—— is very kind-hearted and rather serious. She seems flustered whenever answering a question. "Yes—no—that would be—I don't know," this is her typical response. Sometimes she cannot think what to say, sometimes she stops mid-sentence and cannot find words to continue, and becomes flustered if asked her opinion on anything. If asked, "Do you think it will rain today?" she would say, "How can I say." She does not understand that we are not seeking an infallible oracle. She is entirely reluctant to guess. Such a serene, cheerful nature as the younger Miss K——'s I have never seen in anyone else. It seems that nowhere has any scratch ever marred her mind. Very kind-hearted, always cheerful and full of chatter. No pretension in her dress—no affectation of any kind; extremely simple and unassuming.

One day we had an evening invitation at Dr. M——'s house. Eating is not the primary purpose of such gatherings here. It is to invite ten people together for the sake of acquaintance, conversation, music, and enjoyment. We arrived in the evening. In a small room, a good many ladies and gentlemen had gathered. Entering the room, we paid our respects to the host and hostess. We exchanged appropriate

greetings and made acquaintance with those present. The room was so crowded and there were so many people that there was a great shortage of chairs; most of the men, standing together, engaged in conversation. Whenever some new lady guest arrived, the hostess or host would introduce us to her, and upon introduction, we would go and sit or stand beside her and begin a bit of conversation. Conversation usually began with the weather; the lady would say, "Dreadful weather." I found myself in complete agreement with her on this point. Then she surmised that such weather must be particularly trying for us—that is, for Indians—and hoped the sky would clear soon, and so on. From this thread, various topics followed. Two beauties were present in the gathering. Needless to say, they knew themselves to be beauties. Here beauty is worshipped; here beauty can never remain self-forgetful, beauty's self-consciousness can never lie dormant; the clamour of praise from every side keeps it perpetually awake. In the dance-hall, a beauty's price runs very high; to gain the pleasure of her company, invitation after invitation pours in; many are ready to perform the smallest task for her. Handsome men too receive due attention. They are the darlings of the drawing-room here. I see that hearing this, you will feel tempted to come here. A handsome man like you, arriving in this land so devoted to beauty, would find on every side—

" dense
sighs like the great deluge-wind, and floods of tears
falling like rain, thunderclouds' deep-rolling lamentation—"

However that may be, at the dinner party, the two Misses were the loveliest of beauties. But both of them were rather quiet and reserved. There was not much of that lively cheerfulness one might expect. The younger Miss went and reclined on a couch, while the elder Miss claimed a chair near the wall. One or two of us were assigned to keep them entertained. Unfortunately, I am not skilled in the art of conversation—here I am not what one would call brilliant. The host had been waiting some time for a middle-aged lady, proud of her musical accomplishments, to be persuaded to play. Among the ladies of the house, she was the oldest in age; she had come dressed and adorned most elaborately, with as many rings as could fit on her ten fingers. Had I been the host, I could have guessed from the abundance of her rings alone that she had come from home firmly resolved to play the piano. When her performance concluded, the hostess began pressing me most insistently to sing a song. I found myself in quite a fix. I knew that they did not have any great

fondness for the songs of our country. The trouble with being good-natured is that one cannot save oneself from becoming a laughingstock. So Mr. T—— began, as a prelude to my singing, with one or two introductory coughs. The room fell quiet. I somehow fulfilled my duty. The ladies present found it so amusing that the bounds of propriety nearly gave way; some transformed their laughter into coughing, some pretended something had fallen from their hands and bent down to hide their laughter, one, finding no other recourse, buried her face in her neighbour's shoulder; those who managed to remain somewhat composed exchanged telegraphic glances with each other. On the face of that music-proud, middle-aged lady there played such a faint, contemptuous smile that seeing it made one's blood run cold. When the song ended, my face and ears had turned red; a murmur of praise arose from every side, but after all that laughter, I did not take it seriously. The younger Miss H—— asked me to translate the song into English; I translated it. The song was "Speak not of love." Hearing the translation, she asked me whether love had freedom in our country. There were some photographs of ruins of Rome. The hostess gathered a few guests to show them these. Dr. M—— had bought a telephone, and with this he satisfied the curiosity of several people. In the next room, the table was laid with refreshments. Now and then the host would come and whisper to one of the men, "Take Miss or Mrs. So-and-so in to supper"; he would go to that lady, request permission to escort her to the dining room, take her by the arm, and lead her into the next room to the dining table. At such gatherings, everyone does not go in to eat at once, because that would considerably interrupt the flow of entertainment. In this way, with men and women together, an evening was passed in music, conversation, and refreshment.

There is no counting the number of occasions for social gathering here. Dinners, balls, conversaziones, tea-parties, lawn-parties, excursions, picnics, and so on. Thackeray says: "English society has this eminent advantage over all others—that is, if there be any society left in the wretched, distracted old European continent—that it is above all others a dinner-giving society." When there is leisure, gathering friends for an evening of food, conversation, and merriment is among the essential obligations of a household here. It is hardly necessary to describe dinner parties at length. The party at Dr. M——'s house that I mentioned earlier differs from a formal dinner party only in the matter of hand-shaking (in this land of these barbarians, even eating is a matter of right and left hand). I once went on a boat excursion and

picnic party here. The members of a local Sunday-observance society here organized this boating trip. The members of this society are opposed to strict Sunday observance. So they gather together on Sundays for innocent recreation. Our friend Mr. M—, a Bengali gentleman and a member of this Sunday society, kindly gave us tickets. Going by train from London, we reached a village on the banks of the Thames. Arriving there, we found a large boat moored on the Thames, and some fifty or sixty Sunday-defying men and women gathered together. The day was overcast, the sky clouded, and many who were supposed to come did not arrive. I myself had no particular wish to join this party, but Mr. M— was not one to take no for an answer. Many of us Indians had gathered together; I suppose Mr. M— had tempted everyone with the promise of beauties, since almost everyone had come dressed rather elaborately. Many had tied red bows around their necks. Mr. M— himself had pinned a small sword-shaped brooch to his necktie. One of us jokingly asked him, "This sword-thrust wound in your tie—is that its outward symbol?" He laughed and said, "No, no, it's a dagger of a glance that has pierced my heart—that's what it represents." Whether it happened back home or here, he did not say. Mr. M—'s stock of jest and humour knows no end; that day, on the steamer, he had spent the entire day joking and chatting with everyone. Once he began reading palms and telling fortunes for the ladies. Then he made the whole boatload of girls laugh so much that, to speak truly, a little envy stirred within me at his success. In due time the boat set off. The river was so narrow that it came close to resembling the canals of our own country. On the steamer our conversation and chatter continued. A religious debate arose between an Englishman and one of our fellow Indians. I made acquaintance with someone who brought up English literature—he particularly loved Shelley's poetry; seeing our tastes agreed on this point, he was quite delighted, and specially invited me to visit his house. This man had thoroughly studied English literature and the politics of his own country, but the moment India came up, his ignorance showed at once. He asked me, "Under which king?" I said, astonished, "The British government." He said, "That I know, but I mean, immediately under which Indian king." Such was his knowledge concerning Calcutta. He said, embarrassed, "Forgive my ignorance; we ought to know far more about India, but I confess with shame that I know very little on this subject." In this way conversation continued along the boat's rail; over our heads a canvas awning had been spread. Now and then a drizzle fell, which the canopy somewhat blocked. Where the rain's splash did not reach, I left the girls and

went to another side, opening my umbrella and standing there. I saw our Indian friend Mr. K— had taken shelter amid that crowd of girls. Teasing him about this, he insisted repeatedly that he had no other intention but to escape the rain. But the claim was not entirely credible. Anyway, that day we got wet three or four times in the rain. Getting wet again and again like this, we finally arrived at our destination. By then the rain had stopped, but the sky remained clouded and the ground wet. We were supposed to have our meal in the meadow, but seeing the state of the sky, that plan fell through. After eating, we set out from the boat for a walk in the meadow. Some pairs of lovers took a small punt and went off, poling along; others walked hand in hand, whispering quietly to each other in the meadow. A photographer had come along with us, bringing his photographic equipment; we all stood together in the meadow and had our picture taken. Suddenly it occurred to Mr. M— that all of us who were dark-complexioned should have a group photograph taken together. Some of us hesitated at this proposal—such an "invidious distinction" was not to their liking; but Mr. M— was not one to be turned aside easily. At last the steamer set off toward London. Then the god of a thousand rays, having gathered his myriad beams in due order, closed his sleepy, rose-tinted eyes, resting his weary head upon the cloud-bank couch at the western mountain's peak; the flocks of birds returned each to its own nest, and the herds of cows, lowing, followed the cowherd homeward to the byre. We set off toward London.

THE SEVENTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Let me say a little about the fashionable young ladies of wealth here. To properly appreciate them, one must, for a day or two, entrust oneself to the care of our native mothers-in-law and widowed sisters-in-law. These ladies are either the daughters of wealthy men or the wives of wealthy men. They have servants, they need not perform any labour themselves; there is a housekeeper who oversees the entire household economy, a nurse who raises the children, a governess who looks after the children's education and various other matters—so what remains for the mistress to do at all, tell me. Only one thing remains, and that is adornment; but for this too she has her lady's maid, so even that is not entirely done with her own hands. From morning to evening, the day lies entirely at her disposal. In the morning she lies abed, keeps the door and windows shut against the sunlight, thereby shortening the day somewhat, takes her breakfast lying in bed, and considers herself to have risen quite early enough if she leaves her bedroom before eleven o'clock. After that comes dressing; on this subject I can give you no particular information at all. I hear that very recently bathing has become fashionable in England, but even now this practice is not very widespread. The parts of the body that ladies expose—the face and hands—are washed very carefully, many times a day; the rest of the body they do not consider it necessary to clean so much, because the principal seat of charm being the face alone, it suffices if no dirt appears there. Taking one sponge-bath a month is considered quite sufficient. I once stayed with an English family, and when they heard that I bathed daily, they were quite alarmed. There was no arrangement for bathing at all, so a shallow round basin had to be borrowed and brought in specially. When visitors come to the house, conversing with them is the mistress's task; when many people come together, her duty is to distribute the nectar of her words and laughter equally among all—it would not do to converse more with one particular person, or pay special attention to any one guest. This task is extremely difficult, and probably becomes accomplished only through much practice. I have observed that they speak a sentence looking into one person's face, and then, having finished, smile once, looking at everyone; sometimes they begin a sentence looking at one

person's face, and continue speaking while smiling once at everyone in turn, in the manner that one deals cards briskly while playing—with such speed and dexterity do they scatter fragments of conversation, one by one, among the assembled guests, that it becomes evident they have a whole hand of conversational cards ready. To one they say, "Lovely morning, isn't it?" and immediately, hurriedly, turning to another, "Last night at the concert Madame Neilson sang, it was exquisite!" All the lady visitors present add their own adjective to this remark; one says "charming," another says "superb," another says "something unearthly," and one, being left with nothing, says "Isn't it?" I suppose this is a kind of pestle-pounding of conversation performed first thing every morning. However, in this way, visitors keep coming and going now and then. The lady subscribes to the Mudie's Library. From there, an endless stream of short-lived novels comes and goes to her house. These she keeps continuously swallowing down. Besides this, there is the pretense of love-making. The exchange of sweet smiles and sweet words, a little feigned displeasure over some fictitious pretext, perhaps a bit of wit from the male side, and on the other side a raised delicate fist with a charming reproach—"Oh, you naughty, wicked, provoking man!"—to the perfect satisfaction of the leading man. This receiving of visitors, returning of visits, reading new novels, creating new fashions and following new fashions, and mixed in with all this a bit of sweet flirtation, and perhaps even "falling in love"—these are their daily occupations. Just as in our country girls are prepared from childhood for marriage and are not given proper education, since girls need not go to office, so here too, girls are polished from childhood for the marriage marketplace, and only so much education as is necessary for marriage suffices. A little singing, a little piano-playing, dancing well, some French pronounced with distortion, a bit of knitting and sewing—with these accomplishments, a girl can be made into a gaudily dressed doll fit to be displayed in the shop-window of matrimony. In this respect, the difference between a native doll and a European doll is exactly the difference between the girls of our country and this one—no more than that. Our native girls need not learn piano and other such trifling accomplishments, and English girls too need only a smattering of education—but both are prepared to be sold in the marketplace. Here too, the men rule and the women obey; commanding one's wife, keeping a rein on her mind, driving her about entirely according to one's own wishes—these are rights the husbands here consider ordained by God. Apart from the fashionable young lady, there are many other kinds of women in England,

otherwise the household could not function. Middle-class housewives must exert themselves a good deal—one cannot play the fine lady and manage. Rising in the morning, one must oversee the kitchen once—whether that room is clean or not, whether the household goods have been brought in due proportion, whether things have been kept in their proper places, and so on. One must give orders for cooking and for procuring food, play various clever housekeeping tricks to save money—if some bones remain from yesterday's meat, arrange to make today's soup from them; if any meat cooked the day before yesterday remains, transform it and make it suitable for serving at today's table—such are the various forms of housewifery. Then there is preparing woolen clothing for the children, and even making much of one's own clothing oneself. Not all of these women get the chance to read novels; at most they read newspapers, and I have seen that not everyone even does that; for many, their reading consists solely of reading and writing letters, reading shopkeepers' bills and keeping accounts. They say, "Let the men handle politics and other serious matters—our proper duty is different." Weakness is a matter of pride for women; hence many women, though not really tired, feign languor. It is the same regarding intellectual matters; women boast, saying, "We don't understand all that, sir." Lack of learning, poverty of intellect become a matter of open pride. Middle-class women here pay little attention to intellectual pursuits, and their husbands too are not much troubled by this; their lives consist of an aggregate of small tasks. In the evening, when the husband returns from his workplace, he earns an affectionate kiss (needless to say, this may not be the case in every household); at home the fire is lit for him, food is laid out. In the evening the wife perhaps sits with some sewing, the husband reads aloud a novel to her, the fire blazing before them, the room quite warm, rain falling outside, doors and windows shut. Perhaps the wife plays the piano and sings a little for her husband. The middle-class housewives here are quite simple and unpretentious. Though they have not been well educated, still they know a great deal, and their intelligence is quite sharp. In this country, knowledge can be gained through conversation and social intercourse; they are not confined within inner apartments, they converse with friends and acquaintances, and if some elevated topic comes up for discussion in family gatherings, they listen and can offer their own views; they can understand how intelligent people view a matter from various angles and in what light they see it. So when some topic arises, they do not ask a lot of childish, out-of-the-blue questions, nor need one stand gaping before them. They can converse easily and

naturally with friends, do not sit sullen-faced or overcome with shyness at social gatherings, do not press too closely upon acquaintances, nor do they keep themselves entirely aloof and unsociable from them either. In company, their faces are cheerful and pleasant; though not themselves particularly witty, they can well enjoy jokes and pleasantries, and if something pleases them, they praise it openly; hearing something amusing, they laugh heartily.

I stayed for some days within the household of my tutor—a rather curious household. Mr. B—— is a middle-class man. He knows Latin and Greek very well indeed. He has no children; he, his wife, myself, and one maidservant—just these four people lived in that one house. The master is an elderly man, of a rather gloomy countenance, fussing and fretting irritably all day, living in a small, dark, window-shuttered room next to the kitchen downstairs. First of all, sunlight can hardly penetrate that room at all, and on top of that a curtain hangs over the window; all around, old, tattered, dusty Greek and Latin books of terrifying appearance line the walls, and entering the room, one nearly suffocates in a kind of stale, close air. This room is his study; here he reads and here he teaches. His face is always vexed. It takes time to put on tight boots, and he grows angry at the boots; while walking, a nail in the wall catches at his pocket, and he frowns, working his lips angrily. Being as fussy a man as he is, occasions for his fussing crop up at every step. Going out, he stumbles; despite much tugging, his drawer will not open, and even when it does open, he cannot find what he was looking for. Some mornings I come into his study to find him sitting there, scowling and grumbling for no apparent reason, with not a soul in the room. But Mr. B—— is, at heart, good-natured; he is fussy, but not vicious—he grumbles but does not quarrel. Ordinarily he does not express anger toward people; he has a dog called Tiny, and it is upon this creature alone that his irritation is vented. If it stirs even slightly, he scolds it, and all day long he kicks it about mercilessly. I have hardly ever seen him laugh. His clothing is torn and unkempt. Such is the man. He was once a priest; I am certain that every Sunday, in his sermon, he must have shown his listeners the terrors of hell. He has such a press of engagements, so many people to teach, that some days he gets no time for dinner. Some days he remains occupied with work from the moment he rises until eleven at night. In such circumstances, becoming irritable is no great wonder. The lady of the house is quite kind-hearted, not at all fierce or arrogant; she was probably good-looking once, though she looks older than her

years, wears spectacles, and there is no great display of adornment about her. She cooks herself, does the housework herself; there are no children, so the housework is not particularly heavy. She takes great care of me. It becomes clear within a very short time that there is not much love between this couple, but that does not mean there is much discord between them either—things go on rather silently. Mrs. B— — never goes into her husband's study; throughout the entire day, except at mealtimes, the two of them never see each other; at mealtimes, the two sit silently. Eating, she chats with me, but the two of them never converse with each other. Mr. B— — needed potatoes; he said in a low voice to his wife, "Some potatoes, please" (whether he actually said "please" or whether it went unheard I could not tell). Mrs. B— — said, "I wish you were a little more polite." Mr. B— — said, "I did say 'please.'" Mrs. B— — said, "I did not hear it." Mr. B— — said, "It was no fault of mine." At this point both sides fell silent. In the midst of it, I would feel extremely awkward. One day I came a little late for dinner and found Mrs. B— — scolding Mr. B— —; his offense was having taken too many potatoes with his meat. Seeing me, Mrs. B— — stopped; Mr. B— —, emboldened, took twice as many potatoes out of spite, and Mrs. B— — shot a helpless, piercing glance at him. Neither ever addresses the other properly as "dear darling," nor do they ever call each other by their Christian names—they call each other "Mr. B— —" and "Mrs. B— —." Mrs. B— — might be conversing quite pleasantly with me, and then Mr. B— — would arrive, and at once everything would fall silent. Both behave this way. One day Mrs. B— — was playing the piano for me, when Mr. B— — arrived and said, "When are you going to stop?" Mrs. B— — said, "I thought you had gone out." The piano stopped. Afterward, whenever I wished to hear the piano, Mrs. B— — would say, "I'll play when that horrid man is not at home," and I would find myself extremely embarrassed. The two of them are so incompatible, and yet the household runs along quite smoothly. Mrs. B— — cooks and manages the housework, Mr. B— — earns money by his profession and brings it home; the two never have a real quarrel, only sometimes a word or two of bickering, and that in such a soft voice that it does not even reach the ears of those in the next room. However, I stayed there some days feeling much distressed and was relieved to escape that atmosphere of quiet discord.

THE EIGHTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

We have now left London behind. Do you know that in London's sea of humanity, there is an ebb and flow, tide and neap, just as in the ocean? From the beginning of spring until some days into summer, London knows its season of flood-tide. During this time the city brims with festivity—theatre, song and dance, public balls and private ones, pleasure upon pleasure crowding close together, jostling for room. The wealthy turn their daughters into creatures of the night, making day of darkness. Today a ball bids them come; tomorrow, a dinner; the day after, the theatre; the day after that, Madame Patti's singing—the bustle of the night exceeding that of the day. For these delicate ladies, who must not lift so much as the weight of a sesame seed, hundreds upon hundreds of devoted servants labour night and day without pause—drawing back a chair, passing a plate, opening a door, carving the meat, folding a fan, and so on—while their mistresses, from nine at night until four in the morning, dance without cease in rooms heated by gaslight and human breath; and this is no lazy swaying, no indolent shuffle such as we know at home, but a whirling that never stops. I often wonder how these delicate women endure it. This, then, is merely pleasure and diversion. Beyond this, there is Parliament in session. The steady drone of the band, the rhythm of dancing feet, the chatter and laughter about the dinner table—amid all this, everywhere, a political excitement stirs. The steady and the shifting factions alike follow with keen interest the accounts of each night's parliamentary battles. Such is the tumult of the London season. Then the tide begins to ebb, and London enters its dark fortnight. The clamour of pleasure falls silent; what remains are the few who lack the means, or have some obligation, or simply have no wish to go elsewhere. It has become a fashion to leave London at this time. I read once, in a book (*Sketches and Travels in London* by Thackeray), that many of those who remain in the city during this season shut up the front doors and windows of their houses and live hidden away in the rooms at the back, so that anyone looking might suppose they too had left London.

Go to the gardens of South Kensington, and you will find them adorned no longer by the ribbons, hats, feathers, silks, furs, and rouged faces that once fluttered through them like a swarm of butterflies with darting, restless eyes. The garden is as green as ever, and the flowers bloom as they did, but the living beauty is gone.

With the confused clatter of carriages, horses, and people cleared away, London has grown clean and empty.

The London season being now past, we too have left the city and come to a half-rural place called Tunbridge Wells. After so many days, it was a relief to breathe soft, gentle air once more. From thousands of chimneys, an unceasing black coal-smoke and coal-dust had risen and settled into every crevice of London. Stepping out onto the streets and then washing one's hands afterward, one might well use that water for ink. With every breath drawing in that ceaseless soot, the mind itself seems to turn into some highly combustible substance, fit to catch fire at any moment.

Tunbridge Wells has long been famous for its spring, rich with iron. Many travellers gather here to drink these waters. On merely hearing of the spring, we had imagined—who knows what loveliness awaited us: hills and mountains on every side, trees and groves, birds warbling among green shade, lotus and water-lily blossoming upon a lake, the cuckoo's call, the soft southern breeze, the murmur of bees, and at the end of this idyll, in this most charming spot, drinking a measure of the water at the fifth watch before returning home. Instead, we found a small pit lined with stone set in the midst of a market, water welling up drop by drop, and an old woman standing there with a glass of crystal in her hand. She was doling out one glass of water per penny, and in her idle moments reading yesterday's parliamentary news in a newspaper. Shops crowded round on every side; not a tree nor a plant in sight; and directly opposite, a butcher's stall, where the skinned carcasses of every manner of four-legged beast and "poultry and waterfowl" hung suspended, offered cheap. Seeing all this, my spirit turned so utterly against the place that I could not for the life of me believe this water capable of curing any illness or strengthening any constitution.

The town of Tunbridge Wells itself is quite small; two steps beyond it and one finds trees and open fields. The houses, much like those of London, are without verandah or pillar, standing in unbroken rows beneath sloping roofs—altogether graceless to look upon. The shops, however, are neat and orderly, fitted with glass windows through which one may see the goods arranged within; the butcher's shop alone has no such glass covering—there, whole carcasses of sheep, cattle, pig, and calf hang displayed in various postures directly before the eye, ducks and other dead

fowl dangling by their long necks, while a stout, well-fed young man stands at the door, apron tied about his waist, a great cleaver in hand.

The sheep and cattle of England are famous for the tenderness and flavour of their well-fattened, fat-marbled flesh; were there such a thing as a civilization of cannibals, no doubt English butchers would sell them at a fine price indeed. One Englishwoman told me that the sight of a butcher's shop gives her the greatest satisfaction; it reassures her that there is no want of food, that there is abundance to fill every stomach, and no possibility of famine. As for myself, I find it a melancholy thing, the manner in which meat is brought to the English dining table in so recognizable a shape. When meat is cut, minced, and dressed with spices before serving, one can almost forget that one sits down to eat what was once a living creature; but when the whole animal, with its face and legs distinctly its own, unaltered in form, is set before one, the body shudders at the thought that one sits down to dine upon a corpse.

In the window of the barber's shop, wooden heads of every description bear wigs of curling hair; beards and moustaches hang on display; bottles labelled with grand names promise infallible remedies against baldness and hair-loss. Ladies of long hair, upon entering such shops, have their heads washed by (male) attendants—not maids—who will also dress and curl their hair for them. Here, above all, it is the wine-shops that are the most splendid; come evening, they blaze with light and fill with custom; the buildings themselves are grand, the interior handsomely appointed, glass partitions dividing outer and inner rooms, and the crowd of patrons never thins, especially as night draws on. The tailor's shop, too, is worth notice. Wooden figures, grand and lifelike, stand dressed in the latest fashion, visible through glass windows from within; the women's garments are displayed to one side. Countless are the covetous eyes that gaze upon them day and night; and the fashionable ladies of this town, who cannot afford the costly new styles, come to the shop, study the garments closely, and then go home to fashion cheap imitations with their own hands.

Near our lodgings lies an open, hilly stretch of land—what is called a "common," that is, public ground. It is open on every side, with few large trees; small clumps of shrub and grass cover it, and being without variety of foliage, it has a bare, desolate air, somewhat like a widow's countenance. The ground rises and falls unevenly, thorn-bushes and low scrub scattered about—yet I find the place greatly

to my liking. Amid this rough and broken ground, in certain spots, month after month, tiny flowers called bluebells crowd together in bloom, scattering heaps of blue across the green; elsewhere, amid the grass, rows upon rows of white daisies and yellow buttercups display their abundant beauty. Here and there among the thickets, and beneath the trees, a bench has been set. This is generally a place for walking. Here men are so few and the ground so vast that there is no crowding at all. Unlike London's grand pleasure gardens, thronged on every side with umbrellas and hats, dazzling to the eye—here, among far-scattered benches, a solitary pair may be found seated beneath the shade of a single parasol against the sun, or walking quietly hand in hand.

Taken altogether, the place gives great delight. Summer has not yet ended here. In this season, mornings and evenings are exceedingly lovely. At the height of summer, light begins to break at two or three past midnight, the sun blazes fiercely by four in the afternoon, and the daylight will not fade until nine or ten at night. One day I rose at five and went walking on the common. I sat beneath a tree atop a hill; in the distance, the town lay sleeping like a picture, without the faintest trace of mist. The silent streets, the lofty spires of the churches, the sun-tinged houses against the blue canvas of the sky—all seemed carved and painted like some delicate wooden relief. In truth this town has nothing beautiful to show; its houses have flat walls pierced with windows, a sloping roof above, and upon that a few ugly chimney-pots from which smoke issues. Gradually, as the day advanced, smoke began pouring from hundreds upon hundreds of chimneys at once; in that haze the town grew indistinct; people began to appear upon the roads; carriages started to move; tradesmen, in hand-carts or horse-drawn wagons, began delivering meat, bread, and vegetables from door to door (here, tradesmen deliver goods to each house); gradually the crowd on the common began to gather, and I returned home.

I have a favourite walking place here. Along a road worn uneven by cart-wheels, winding over hilly ground, bordered on both sides by blackberry bushes and dense creeping vines, tall trees casting their shade, and along the roadside, among the grass, wild daisies and other flowers growing. Labourers pass to and fro, their coats and trousers soiled with dust and mud, their faces grimy; small children with round, rosy-red faces play by the doorways or in the street—I have never in any country seen such plump, round-cheeked children. Near some of the houses lie small pools, upon which tame ducks float. The fields, though set upon hilly ground, are level and

clean where ploughed. The grass is remarkably green and fresh; since the sunlight here is not as fierce as at home, the grass does not scorch to the colour it does in our own land, and so it is a great pleasure to gaze upon these meadows—the eye seems almost to drown in that abundance of soft green. Here and there, great trees and white houses appear small in the distance. Beyond this open, empty meadowland, far away, one comes upon a vast forest of towering pine trees—trees crowded close together, their shade stretching far, deep and grave and utterly silent.

THE NINTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Summer. A beautiful sun has risen. It is now two in the afternoon. There blows a pleasant breeze, much like the breeze of a winter afternoon at home, while the sun blazes on every side. It feels so pleasant, and yet a certain strange melancholy comes over me—I hardly know how to describe it.

We are now in a town called Torquay, in Devonshire. By the sea. Hills all around. A perfectly clear day. No fog, no mist, no darkness; trees on every side, birds calling everywhere, flowers in bloom. When we were at Tunbridge Wells, I used to think that if Cupid dwelt there, he would have to fashion his bow from whatever thorny bramble he could find in the woodland thickets, plucking two or three wild flowers to make his garland. But if, at Torquay, Cupid has devised some weapon like a Gatling gun, capable of loosing a thousand arrows a minute, and if that weapon were kept in constant use day and night, still there would be no danger of his floral treasury running dry—so many flowers are there, everywhere, on every path and roadway, that one must walk trampling flowers underfoot. Each day we go walking upon the hills. Cattle graze, sheep graze; in some places the path is so steep that climbing up or down proves difficult. In some places the way narrows greatly, trees rising on either side to darken it, broken steps here and there to ease the ascent, creepers and vines growing up through the very path itself. On every side, a honeyed sunlight. The air here is rather warm, reminding one of India. Even in this mild warmth, one notices how much more lifeless are the creatures here compared to those of London. The horses move at a leisurely pace; the people too show none of that anxious bustle, but go about unhurried, at their ease.

I take great delight in the seashore here. When the tide comes in, the great rocks along the shore sink beneath the water, only their heads showing above the surface, looking like little islands. Close by the water's edge stand many hills, both small and great. The waves, beating again and again, have carved out caves beneath these hills; and when the tide goes out, we sometimes go and sit within these caves. Here and there within the cave, quite clear little pools of water have gathered; sea-moss lies scattered about; a wholesome scent of the sea pervades the air; stones lie strewn on every side. Some days we all set about pushing and rolling these stones, gathering various shells and snails. One hill leans out far over

the sea; we struggle with all our might, on certain days, to climb to the top of these difficult heights, and sit there gazing down at the rise and fall of the waves below. A great roaring rises up; small boats pass by with their sails raised; sunlight all around; our umbrellas open overhead; and resting our heads upon the stone, we lie there chatting idly. Where else could one find such a place to pass the hours in perfect indolence? Some days we go up into the hills, and finding some secluded, sheltered spot enclosed by stone and hidden beneath bushes, we settle into that little hollow with a book to read.

THE TENTH LETTERS FROM A SOJOURNER IN EUROPE

Christmas has passed, and now, before one knows it, another festival has come round. Today is the first day of the New Year. Yet I see nothing here to mark it with any great commotion. I had not known that the New Year would arrive here with such silent footsteps. I have heard that in France people welcome the New Year with great ceremony. Last night, on the final evening of the old year, our neighbours kept their windows open. Lest the old year should be trapped within the house, and lest the new year, arriving, should have to wander vainly outside seeking entrance at the window.

We have long since left Torquay and returned again to London. I now live as part of the household of a Mr. K—. He, his wife, their four daughters, two sons, three maidservants, myself, and a dog named Toby make up the full number of this house. Mr. K— is a physician. The hair of his head and his beard are nearly all turned white. He is a well-built, handsome man to look at, with an amiable nature and a kindly countenance. Mrs. K— looks after me with the most sincere care. In winter, if I fail to dress warmly enough, I receive a scolding from her. At meals, if she suspects I have eaten too little, she will not rest until I have eaten to her satisfaction. In England, people hold a great fear of coughing; should I, by some misfortune, cough twice in a day, she insists at once on stopping my bath, dosing me with a dozen different remedies, and arranging that hot water be poured over my feet before bed—only then does she let the matter rest. The eldest Miss K— is always first to rise in the household. She comes down to see whether breakfast is ready, and stirs the fire with a shovel or two of coal to brighten the room. A little later, a great clattering of feet may be heard upon the stairs. Old Mr. K—, shivering in the cold, arrives at the breakfast table, warming his hands, back, and chest hastily at the fire before sitting down, newspaper in hand. He kisses his eldest daughter, and exchanges with me a "good morning." He is a cheerful man. We share a laugh or two together, and he reads out this or that item from the newspaper. No sooner has he finished his cup of coffee than his two other daughters come in and kiss him. There is an arrangement among them all: whichever day the daughters rise before Mr. K—, he must pay them a forfeit of five annas; but on whatever day he rises before them, they must each pay him four annas. Though the sum is small, he has by now accumulated debts of nearly two or three pounds owed to him. Every

morning he demands payment of his debtors; but the debtors merely laugh the matter off. Mr. K— protests, "This is most unjust." He often appeals to me as arbiter, saying, "Now then, Mr. T—, tell me yourself, is it fair to welsh on a debt like this?" Be that as it may, for want of payment, the debt continues to grow. Then Mrs. K— arrives. Our breakfast usually ends by about half-past nine. The eldest son has already eaten and gone off to his work, and Mr. K—'s youngest son and daughter have long since finished eating as well. I had almost forgotten to mention one member of the household. The dog Toby has for some while now been sitting by the fire. A small dog, shaggy-haired, his eyes and face hidden beneath his fur. He has grown old, and one eye has gone blind. Having been much indulged, this creature has developed rather lordly habits. He will settle in no room but the drawing-room. Of all the seats in the house, he leaps unabashed onto the brightest and most comfortable armchair, and should anyone else come and sit beside him, he will haughtily rise and settle himself upon the arm of the chair instead. Every morning at breakfast, three biscuits are set aside for him. He sits by the table with these biscuits, waiting until I come and play with him a little—taking a biscuit from his mouth, or rolling one to him. In earlier days, when I was slow to rise, he would take his allotted biscuits and sit whining outside my bedroom door. But finding that this irritated me when I scolded him, he no longer whines; instead he pushes gently at the door with his paw and waits silently outside until I open it. The moment the door opens and I step out, he leaps and bounds, wagging his tail in delight; then he looks first at the biscuit, then at my face. In any case, breakfast concludes by half-past nine. After that, the mistress of the house, gloves on her hands, accompanied by the maids, goes from the top floor to the ground floor, tidying belongings, cleaning doorways, and overseeing the household work generally in this fashion of setting the house in order. She visits the kitchen, checks the accounts for vegetables, bread, and meat, and settles what is owed. From time to time she comes upstairs to consult with her husband on household matters. She examines whether the kitchen equipment is clean and properly stored, whether good meat has been purchased, whether the weight falls short—she looks into all of this. She occasionally assists the cook as well. From after breakfast until about one or half-past one, she remains occupied with various tasks in this manner. Sometimes her eldest daughter joins her in this work. The second daughter cleans the drawing-room daily with a duster. The maids sweep the floors, and whatever dust settles on the furnishings she wipes and cleans herself. The third daughter is occupied with various kinds of needlework—pillow covers, cushions, socks, clothing, and the like—writes letters, and on some days practises music and singing. She is the singer

and musician of the household. These days, since school is closed, the youngest son and daughter are absorbed in play. By half-past one our lunch is finished, after which each returns to whatever task occupies them. This is also the hour when visitors tend to call. Perhaps Mrs. K— sits in the drawing-room, spectacles on, darning a pair of her husband's worn socks. The youngest daughter may be making a woollen garment for her nephew. The second daughter, finding a moment's leisure, sits by the fire, perhaps engaged in reading Green's *History of the English People*. The eldest Miss K— may have gone to visit some friend's house. Around three o'clock, perhaps, a visitor arrives. The maid enters the drawing-room and announces the name—"Mr. and Mrs. A—"—and even as she speaks, the two are already in the room. Setting aside socks and clothing, closing her book, the lady of the house and her daughters rise to welcome the guests. Conversation begins on the subject of the weather, and on points of agreement and disagreement regarding it. Mrs. A— says, "Mr. X— had a fever at the age of forty-three. Because of the fever he was unable to go to the office for three or four days. Yesterday he went to the office. The people there have begun teasing him mercilessly about his illness." The others express their sympathy for the man. From this the conversation gradually turns to whatever else may be said on the subject of fever and illness. Miss K— brings news that a certain paternal aunt of Mr. J—'s, a Miss E—, living in Australia, has married her cousin B—. After some further conversation of this kind, the visitors take their leave. In the evening, perhaps we all go out walking together. Returning from our walk, dinner is served at half-past six. After dinner, at seven, we all gather again in the drawing-room. The fire is burning. The room grows pleasantly warm. We sit gathered round the hearth. On some evenings we have music. I have by now learned a good many English songs. I sing. Miss K— has taught me a number of songs. But mostly, in the evening, we occupy ourselves a little with reading. We take turns, each choosing a different kind of book on different days. Sometimes, reading on, it grows to be half-past eleven or even midnight before we know it.

I have grown quite close to the children. They call me "Uncle Arthur." Ethel, the youngest girl, wishes that I should be her uncle alone, and no one else's. If her brother Tom claims me too, she is unhappy. One day Tom, wishing to tease his little sister, insisted with particular emphasis that I was *his* Uncle Arthur. At once Ethel threw her arms about my neck, her lips trembling, and began to cry. Tom is a bit restless, but a thoroughly good-natured boy. Very plump and round. His head is quite large. His face is exceedingly serious. He sometimes asks me the strangest

questions. One day he asked me, "Uncle Arthur, what do mice do?" Uncle replied, "They steal food from the kitchen." He thought this over a moment and said, "Steal? But why do they steal?" Uncle said, "Because they are hungry." Tom did not much like this answer. He had always been taught that it is wrong to take another's things without asking. Without another word, he walked away. If his sister ever cries, he rushes to her at once and says consolingly, "Oh, poor Ethel, don't you cry! Poor Ethel!" Ethel, for her part, is quite conscious that she is a young lady. She sits back in her chair with a certain gravity. She sometimes scolds Tom, saying, "Don't disturb me." One day Tom fell down and began to cry. I said to him, "Fie, crying is unbecoming!" At once Ethel rushed to me and declared proudly, "Uncle Arthur, I once fell down in the kitchen when I was a child, but I did not cry." When she was a child, indeed!

Mr. N—, the doctor's other son, lives in the house, but I scarcely ever see him. He is at his office the whole day. Even when he returns from the office, he is rarely to be seen for long. The reason is his engagement to a Miss E—; the two of them are conducting their courtship. On Sundays he must take his beloved to church both morning and evening. When he finds a free moment in the afternoon, he goes to his sweetheart's house and drinks a cup of tea there. Every Friday evening he is invited to dine at her house. In this manner, his own time is very scarce indeed. The two of them are so content in each other's company that they seem to require the company of no other creature to pass their leisure hours. Even should the sky itself fall on a Friday evening, Mr. N— will still smooth his hair, apply his pomade, brush his coat, and step out the door, immaculately turned out, umbrella in hand. Once it turned bitterly cold, and he had taken a bad cough; I thought to myself, surely the poor fellow will not go out today. But before seven o'clock had struck, there he was, come down the stairs, perfectly dressed to go.

In any case, I have grown quite intimate with this family. The other day the second daughter told me that when they first heard an Indian gentleman was coming to live among them, they had been rather afraid. On the day I was expected to arrive, the second and youngest daughters had actually fled to a relative's house, and did not return home for nearly a week. It was only afterward, when they heard that I had no tattoo marks on my face or body, that I had not pierced my lip, and did not wear such ornaments, that they returned home. They tell me that although they spoke with me during those first days after their return, they did not actually look at my face for two days more—perhaps fearing what strange, cast-in-some-foreign-

mould face they might behold. And when at last they did look—well, and what then?

In any case, I live happily with this family. My evenings pass pleasantly enough—music, reading. And Ethel will not let her Uncle Arthur out of her sight even for a moment.