



VESTIBULE OF DUPLEIN PALACE AT PONDICHÉRY

**BRITISH SOCIAL
LIFE IN INDIA**

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By
DENNIS KINCAID

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PREFACE

MY son Dennis left this book not quite finished. His friend Mr. David Farrer very kindly undertook the task of completion. Dennis was very anxious to place on record that Chapter IX was based on notes supplied by his mother. Acknowledgment is due to Mrs. Kipling and Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd., for permission to quote from Rudyard Kipling's *Departmental Ditties* on pages 228 and 229.

CHARLES A. KINCAID.

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
VESTIBULE OF DUPLEIX' PALACE AT PONDICHÉRY <i>(From a Plan at the Ministère des Colonies, Paris)</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"OUR STATION" <i>(A mid-Nineteenth-Century Impression)</i>	24
THE COLONEL	32
THE JUDGE'S WIFE	40
THE MAGISTRATE'S WIFE	48
THE BEDROOM	64
THE BURRA KHANAH—"A GRAND FEED"	88
THEATRICALS	136
THE COFFEE-SHOP	160
MISERIES OF THE FIRST OF THE MONTH <i>(After Rowlandson)</i>	176
MISERIES IN INDIA <i>(After Rowlandson)</i>	192
QUI HI ARRIVES AT THE BUNDER HEAD <i>(After Rowlandson)</i>	200
THE BOMBAY TAVERN <i>(After Rowlandson)</i>	224
SHOOTING WATERFOWL IN THE JHEELS	240
AN INDIAN CADET—MARCHING TO JOIN HIS STATION IN PATRI- ARCHAL STYLE	256
RETURNING FROM A HOG HUNT	272

PROLOGUE

ON April 4, 1579, Father Stevens of the Society of Jesus sailed from Lisbon for the East Indies. He was the first Englishman known to have reached India. His name is still remembered with gratitude and affection by many Indians ; for he was one of the earliest writers in Marathi, one of the pioneers of that language which he considered the most graceful and elegant he had ever come across ; and he was the only European who has ever written a considerable poem in any Eastern language. The son of a rich London merchant, he was an ardent Catholic, and after studying the classics at New College he went to Douai to be trained for the priesthood. He came under the influence of Campion and entered the Society of Jesus. He felt drawn to the mission-fields of the East, enthralled by stories of St. Francis Xavier's triumphs and all the romance of Jesuit endeavour in the China Seas, which excited his imagination in the same way that tales of Elizabethan seamen in the New World stirred the young Protestant apprentices he had known at his home in London.

The voyage was long and wearisome, and it must have been with great relief that he saw at last the long green coast-line of the Konkan, islands of moist sweet grass, the red soil and heavy trees, and far inland the jagged line of the Ghats. The ship rode into the calm waters of Goa Creek and on a hill rising from the dark jungle Father Stevens saw the great golden city, saw the walls and gateway, the white mass of the cathedral, the twin blue towers of St. Francis' convent, the vast façade of St. Augustine

BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA

completed only seven years before. The landing stage was in a palm-shaded inlet just below the cathedral, and new arrivals entered the city by a gateway known as the Gate of the Viceroys, a square triumphal arch with heroes in Grecian armour posturing in their niches. A wide road led past the cathedral into the centre of the town.¹ One would have imagined that for some time the Jesuit enthusiast would be too much moved by all that Catholic splendour to have thought of mundane concerns; yet if we can judge by the letter written to his father soon after his arrival² almost the first thought that occurred to him was that here in India was a fine market for English trade. It is strange and typical of the divided allegiance of so many of the best Englishmen of that age, that Stevens, who spent the rest of his life in the territories of a king intermittently at war with England, and many of whose friends and contemporaries at Douai were most cruelly executed by the English Government, nevertheless remained sturdily devoted to English interests. He never seemed to tire of helping Englishmen in trouble, though most of those he met in Goa must have caused him some anxiety. He had, however, only himself to blame for their presence, for his letter to his father excited so much comment and interest that some merchant adventurers set out for Aleppo in the *Tyger*³ meaning to make the journey to India overland across Syria. In 1583 four of these Englishmen arrived in Goa: Leeds, Newbery, Fitch and Story. They were under arrest and were "examined whether they were good Christians", by which, of course, was meant good Catholics. They were

¹ *La Vieille Goa*. Germano Correia. Imprimeire Royal.

² Quoted in Hakluyt's *Voyages*.

³ An echo of the popular interest in this expedition is in Shakespeare's

"Her husband's to Aleppo gone
Master of the *Tyger* . . ."

BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA

ready to profess any creed and Stevens lent his support to their claim to be Catholics, though he must have known very well they were not. They must have remembered enough Catholic jargon to enable them to pass muster, and it is most improbable that the examining ecclesiastics knew enough about the Elizabethan settlement to distinguish Anglican characteristics. Once certified to be "Good Christians" by the authorities, the English visitors must have found little curiosity about their real religion among the laity, for the commercial and military circles in Goa were as casual in religious practice and as vague in theology as their heretic guests. Indeed one of the earliest parties of Portuguese soldiery in India sat through a service in a Hindu temple of Kali, the Dark Goddess, under the impression it was the shrine of a local black Madonna.¹ Leeds not only professed Catholicism, but offered to become a Jesuit on condition of his being given a contract to paint the frescoes in one of the new churches then under construction. The contract finished, he announced he had no vocation for the religious life and, having married an Indian girl, opened a shop in Goa. The other English visitors wandered about the streets, commenting on the umbrellas and palanquins of the local officials, and on the contrast between their own bright clothes and the eternal black of Portuguese male attire.² They shook their heads with Protestant self-righteousness at the *Strapado* for the correction of heretics, an engine of torture displayed in the chief square,³ and passing on with muttered comments on "those most zealous bigots and notorious hypocrites" they visited the churches, "which were richly endowed to maintain the Luxury of a great Number of idle Drones", and admired

¹ K. M. Pannika, *Portuguese in Western India*.

² Correia, *op. cit.* ³ Fryer, *New Account of the East Indies*.

BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA

the famous bells, "all christened and dedicated to some Saint, having a specific power to drive away all manner of evil Spirits, except Poverty in the Laity and Pride in the Clergy, but to those that are not used to Nocturnal Noises, they are very troublesome in the Nights". They were surprised that there were no stained-glass windows (which argues in them a certain Catholic instinct) and were very careful not to come into conflict with priests as did Mr. Hamilton's friend who refused to make a present to some passing friar of a fine fish he had just bought; whereon "the Priest gave him a Reprimand in scurrilous Language, and the Gentleman using some tart Language to the Priest he let fly the sharp Dart of Excommunication, that pierced him so deep that it cost him above 7 pounds Sterl".¹

When tired of Goa they wandered inland. Mr. Story entered the service of the Mogul Emperor as a jeweller. Mr. Newbery journeyed slowly to Persia and there disappeared. Mr. Fitch strolled serenely through Burma and the Shan States and arrived in England in time to be present at the foundation of the East India Company on September 24, 1599.

This first party of merchant-adventurers was followed by numerous others. These forerunners of the Nabobs were strangely diverse in character. There was Mildenhall who tried to supplant the newly-formed East India Company by a company consisting of himself and his friends. He lived three years at the Mogul court at Agra and then visited Persia where he "learned the art of poysoning by which he made away three other Englishmen . . . but himself tasted of the same Cup and was exceedingly Swelled, but continued his life many months with Antidotes".²

¹ Hamilton, *New Account of the East Indies*.

² Quoted in Foster, *Early English Travellers*.

BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA

And there were the two musicians Lancelot Canning, a virginals-player, and Robert Trully, a cornet-player, who hoped to make their fortune by introducing the Mogul court to Western music.¹ They were allowed to perform before the assembled court. Canning played first, but the faint watery music of the virginals had no attraction for Jehangir's flamboyant court and the audience became restive, at which Canning nearly "dyed with conceipt". It was left for Trully to uphold the reputation of European music. The first notes of his cornet caused a sensation. The Emperor asked if he might try this gorgeous instrument, and, finding it hard to manipulate, ordered all his musicians to learn the cornet. The Imperial Chief Bandmaster was annoyed at the favour shown to a foreign musician and insisted on trying the cornet after the Emperor. He blew so hard that he injured himself internally and died. In spite of this dramatic scene, Jehangir's interest in cornets soon waned and Trully only received fifty rupees for his entertainment. So Trully wandered south, hoping to repeat his success at the court of Golconda. Finding that his offers of a cornet-recital awoke no enthusiasm there, he decided to become a Musulman "which was kyndlye accepted by the Kinge. So Tryllye was circumcised and had a newe name given him and greate allowance from the Kinge".

But openings for English trade were won, not by the salesmanship of these wandering bagmen but by the rash and nonchalant bravery of a series of fighting seamen. In their choleric defiance of opposition there is a familiar ring. When the Musulman allies of the Portuguese sent Middleton a warning letter he replied, "You sent me a foolish paper, what it is I know not, nor care not. In God is my trust, and therefore respect not what the devil or you can do with

¹ Purchas, *His Pilgrimes*.

BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA

your charms." When the Moguls revoked their first permission to settle in Surat, English ships blockaded the coast of Gujarat, attacking the pilgrim-ships bound for Mecca till the Mogul Governor capitulated. And when the Portuguese opposed English penetration, the English, in face of extraordinary odds ("the *Dragon* alone made their Admiral and Vice-Admiral turn back and fly before her, we having had but one man slain" ¹) swept Portuguese shipping from the Indian seas, and in spite of the Viceroy's exclamations against "these thieves, disturbers of States, a people not to be permitted in any commonwealth", ² actually blockaded Goa. However, English and Portuguese interests were too closely allied for long hostility and the two nations presently concluded a treaty which was "carried out with the greatest punctuality by the English", wrote the Viceroy of Goa, "very different," added the Viceroy, "from the Dutch." ³

¹ Letter from Thos. Aldworthe.

² Thomas Kerridge.

³ Danver's *Report on Archico da Torre do Tombo*.