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Lillooal

8. 5. 03.

Calcutta.

My dearest Mama

6-1-03.

Ralph & I have been very gay lately, we went up to Singapore for Christmas & enjoyed our little visit immensely. I have never seen Oliver look so fit & well, & he is so bright & merry I think having tons & tons of work to do thoroughly agrees with him!

Ruby looks very well but has got so very thin, but as for little Julia, words fail to do her justice. She is a perfect little Angel. She is very like Ruby with a thick mop of fair hair, pretty blue eyes, a dear little mouth & the prettiest & quaintest little nose in the world, she is above the average size

in every way, looks far more like two years old than his real age, & is quite the strongest, healthiest looking little creature I've ever seen out here, with such bright pink cheeks! You will be surprised to hear that I actually left Baby down here with nurse all the time!

Of course she wrote full descriptions every day & nothing but painful sermons would have made me do such a horrible cruel wicked thing. Poor little soul he had to spend his first Xmas all alone. Still if I had taken him with me I shouldn't have been very much with him because we were living in Mr Birkinshaw's house about 2 miles from Oliver's & Baby would have been left there with nurse all the time while we were over with Ruby & Oliver, & I should have worried

about him all the time, then of course I had to think of the change of climate, it was bitterly cold up in Dinapore, whereas down here it is quite hot, unusually so for the time of year, & of course he would have had another change of milk! Besides all the knocking about in the train, so I think it was best, though I don't think I shall ever quite get over the fact that I left him! Nurse is a really nice old thing, she won't allow me to interfere in the smallest thing, & I must own I really never have to, for she keeps Baby beautifully clean & happy & he is very fond of her. The only thing I have to complain about is that I don't see enough nowadays of my little baby! My brother Harry has been staying with us lately, & we've been going out to Tennis parties etc & to the Theatres, which have been very good, & on New Year's Eve we had a small dinner party! My brother Jack, I haven't seen yet, because they wouldn't give him leave! But he wrote & told us rather a

awful tale yesterday, which he says has not been officially acknowledged yet so we are all hoping its not true.

However he says, that 15 mins. after the Duke & Duchess of Cornwall stepped out of the train, in which they had travelled from Bombay to Delhi, & while the train was being shunted onto a siding, the train of the brake apparatus fell off & the Duke's salon!! Had this happened as Jack says, while the train was at mail speed between stations, there would certainly have been no Duke & Duchess left, and probably no Durbar! Another tale is that four skeletons have just been discovered in a horse box on a siding near Delhi!! In fact now-a-days one hears nothing but shocking stories relating to the Durbar.

And the whole of the S. I. By staff are trembling in their shoes, as the end of it approaches fearing they will be dismissed.

One poor fellow has died, owing entirely to the over work, which he was quite unable to cope with, being out



of health at the time, & they say his death was simply collapse! Another Officer fainted in his chair, & seemed quite unconscious for hours afterwards!

Still thank goodness we are coming to the end of it at last & the strain won't go on much longer.

Coming down from Dinajpore Ralph & two other gentlemen had to sleep on the floor of the carriage, & I & a dear little German baroness had to let some horrid dirty Eurasian women into our carriage!! And suffered tortures in consequence as we were not able to open the windows owing to the bitter cold! Lilloak is becoming a large place and as two more Patib's families have just come here, we have now quite a lot of ladies, & can



have garden parties amongst ourselves! When I was advertising for a nurse, amongst other applications I got, I received one from a woman called Mrs. Wauld, she hadn't been out to service before, but she said she had had 3 children of her own, & quite understood the management of them, & she went on to say "if Mrs. Strachey is any relation of Lady Jane Strachey & Lady Colville, I am sure if you write to them they will speak very kindly of my late grandmother Mary Alexander who was housekeeper at Belvedere."!!! Which is rather a quaint coincidence isn't it? However I had already engaged my present nurse, & I didn't think it worth

while to unsettled Baby again on the strength that her grandmother had been a good housekeeper to you, therefore she would be a good nurse to Baby.

So I wrote a nice letter to her & said that I was already suited, & would remind you of her "late grandmother"!!! I rather think Ruby would like to get hold of her as her young nurse is turning out rather a handful.

As far as we have heard nothing of the dance, at least no details, so please write somebody up to write by return, as we are longing to hear all about it especially ~~any~~ what everybody wore!!! We were delighted with the last good accounts of Papa, & hope he will escape the Influenza.

The heat here has been most trying & unhealthy, but since we had a day's rain it has got much more bearable. Still even now it is very hot in the middle of the day. With fondest love from us all three
Believe me, dearest Mamma
yr. very affectionate daughter
Margaret D. Strachey