

Allahabad July 8<sup>th</sup> /77.

5556

My dear Mamma I was reckoning  
very much on getting your letter  
yesterday and hearing all about the  
children, so we were disappointed when  
we heard that they had missed the train  
and that we should have to wait  
another week for tidings of them.  
I hope you will have a pleasant time  
with them and not find them  
too much for you. I dare say however  
they will be able to amuse themselves  
pretty well, if only the weather is fine  
enough. I am very glad to hear Mrs  
Layard and Julie have arrived  
and that you have seen Mr Ewen.  
I had been wondering what had  
become of him. I am sure you  
and Mrs Layard will soon be  
very good friends. I hope they will  
like Malvern well enough to come  
to it again next year when I am  
at home. You are quite right in  
concluding that I have felt the hot  
weather very severely. Indeed

John and I are seriously talking the other day whether it would not be advisable for me to come home next year and remain for good, or at any rate until he gets a hill station when I should be able to join him again. I have no aches nor pains of any kind to complain much of, but the continual heat so entirely takes the life out of me that I do not think if I tried another season of it, I should have vitality enough left to get my strength up again when the cool weather came. Probably in September or October I may go to the hills instead of to Delhi or Agra, as we at first intended. By the middle of the cool weather I shall be able to tell whether I have got back an average amount of health, and if not John thinks the safest thing for me will be not to run the risk of entirely losing my health & remaining in the country. I would much rather stay if I could, but I see that I could be of much more service to him, in years to come, by keeping well and making a home

for the children in England. That by becoming an invalid here. No new time will decide it all. Out of his eight remaining years of service, he will have two in furlough, when he should be together, and two in the hills, when I could join him, so it would not be as bad as it looks. I should certainly prefer being at home to the expense and worry of going to the hills for seven months every year and it would be impossible for John to get up to me, as the distances are so great. But we shall see.

My old ayah's daughter was married last night, and we had quite a little entertainment. It reminded me very much of the Bible. The wedding took place at night. About nine the bridegroom's procession came with torches and music and a dancing girl. The bridegroom was mounted on a pony with a clean white coat on made very full and a quantity of crimson drapery round about him. He had a high tinsel crown on his head with chains of white flowers, covering down over his face. All the others

I suppose about 50 of them, and women  
were walking. When they got opposite our  
veranda, they stopped, as a mark of  
attention to us I suppose, the torch-  
bearers made an extra flare up, by  
dipping their torches into turpentine,  
a few fireworks were let off, the bridegroom  
made a low salaam, the band set up,  
and the musical cue began for per-  
formance. The gards dressed in loose white  
trousers with a very full perfectly trans-  
parent spangled gauze draped over it and  
silver ornaments on his forehead, neck,  
ears, nose, arms and feet. The whole  
thing, with the many coloured dresses  
of the men and our own servants' white  
clothes in the foreground made a  
curiously eastern picture. The pro-  
cession then moved on to within  
about fifty yards of the bride's house,  
when they all settled themselves down,  
the bridegroom surrounded by his  
torches, in the middle. As it was only  
nine then, and the wedding did not  
take place until two in the morning,  
I am afraid they would be rather  
tired. Mrs Dally and I then went on

to see what the bride was doing. There  
was a little booth made covered with  
leaves and flowers, about large enough  
for four people to sit under and in this  
the ceremony was to take place at 2 o'clock.  
In front of it the bride herself wrapped  
from head to foot in a thick cloth was  
sitting on the ground, her face closely  
covered up, the ayah and another woman  
were holding a red cloth canopy over  
her head whilst a third woman in  
front of her was going through a variety  
of performances. She first dipped her  
fingers in oil and crossing her hands,  
touched the girl's feet, knees, elbows,  
shoulders and head with it. Then  
she sprinkled water round her, and  
then took up a peat staff covered with  
paterus and waved it about all  
round her. This performance was  
done through by seven women in  
succession, and then the little bride  
who must have been dreadfully tired  
went into her home to be dressed for the  
ceremony. He did not see any more  
than that, as he could not wait until  
two o'clock. When the girl got up I saw  
that the ground where she had been

attire, was covered with white cabalistic marks, some of them like those I had seen in the Benares temples. I had been very sorry to find no one with us to tell us the meaning of the different ceremonies. There was a great concourse of people around the house with torches blazing about and all through the night we heard the music going on. To-day the ayah has brought the bride to meet us and to us. She seemed very pleased with the betrothal. I gave her. Of course this was one of the very poorest sort of wedding, but perhaps on that account one was able to see more of it. In a good wedding, the bride wears procession, her camels, elephants, illuminated ornaments and all sorts of fineries. One thing struck me, the bridegroom had a corner of his red drapery held up before his mouth the whole time, just as people hold handkerchiefs to their faces at a funeral, and Mrs. Dally told me this was the custom at all Hindoo marriages. Mrs. Samart and her two children spent two days with us on their road

to Bombay and this morning Mrs. Samart turned up and is staying until night, when to go after them. He had a great benefit of the children. The little boy was crying all the time. I could not help feeling very thankful when the visit was over, though Mrs. Samart said to me quite innocently "You know I really am proud of my children". Really ignorance!

I do not want what I have said about coming home, to reach Nottingham, as all is so undecided yet, and whether I stay longer than the six months must entirely depend upon how I am when the war matter is over. I shall certainly not run the risk of another summer in the plains. John keeps very well. The heats suits him better than the damp. He sends love to you both, and with mine I am your affectionate daughter Eliza