

Solera
Punjab
30th June 1850

My dear Pippa

I don't know if this letter will catch the post this week, but I may as well write it on the off chance, as I probably shan't feel in a corresponding mood next week.

I have got 3 months leave from the 15th July to 15th October and am looking forward joyously to a holiday. We are going to Simla, where we have taken a house; this sounds very extravagant, but as a matter of fact we have got the chateau, adequately furnished, at the very small rent (for Simla) of 300 rupees for the 3 months, and shall be able to do ourselves a good bit cheaper & far more comfortably than if we had gone to a hotel. The house is by name "Srin Villa" & is close to Wheatfield, where the C.C. Johnsons lived when

Elmor was in Suiala; it is nice and central & quite commodious - with a drawing-room, dining-room, 2 bed rooms & 2 dressing rooms, a small sort of writing room & a very nice enclosed verandah up stairs; the rooms are large & airy, there is a fine view of the snows from the front, the kitchen and offices are convenient, & altogether I am well pleased. I had to go up to Jutogh (close to Suiala) last Monday on a Court martial, & took the opportunity to run in & look at the house. The only drawbacks I can see at present are a rather steep hill to go down & the monkeys, which I am sure will come in when we go out & put on all our clothes, chuck the furniture about and generally misbehave. Charlie & Aggie are coming up to Suiala on the 1st August; they are going to sleep with a series of friends, so we hope they will come to us for a bit too; also I heard from Ralph the other day, who thinks he may be able to get away from his beastly bridge for a bit in August, so we will try & induce him to come & stay with us. Grace is much excited at the prospect of being a chaperone in "the modern Capua", & spends all her spare time in making confections to be worn there; I also am in secret much interested in going back to the old haunts of 10 years ago.

When I knew for certain that we were going up I wrote to a friend of mine who has something to do with the Amateur Dramatic Club there & said we both would like to do some acting & at least immediately we were offered parts in the first play coming off after our arrival, it is the "White Elephant" which we saw in London just before I came out; do you remember - Grace had a bad cold & couldn't come, so we got Spearman instead - it was Ralph's head & we dined at the Cafe Monaco first. Well I daresay you remember as little about the play as I do - my most vivid recollection being Miss Calvert as the cast-keeper of a London house. I have been offered the leading young woman's part, which was done by Charlie Hawbury at home, and Grace has got the second best Lady's - a very good one - so we are in luck; she has also been awarded "to ripras" for adapting any dresses she may have, which is just noble. They have sent us our parts but not the whole book, so we have to guess at what it is all about, assisted by the little I can remember. Also we haven't the least idea of who make up the rest of the cast.

The rains began here yesterday afternoon, and there has been an unceasing downpour ever since, but it's a relief from the muggy heat we had been having, & we haven't got tired of it yet.

I hope you enjoyed your Italian tour, though it sounded rather rash starting off just as the revolution was breaking out.

I am to receive (some day) a medal for the Tochi Campaign, and also 158 rupers "batta" - better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, but I don't think I would offer to do it again for the same amount. I ordered the Rifle Brigade Chronicle to be sent to Lancaster Gate, containing my story of events; it has been somewhat edited since it left my hands, especially in the way of punctuation.

The Rana here gave a luncheon party the other day; he asked for the great honour of my company and also (on a separate piece of paper) for the honour of the company of Mrs Strachey & her children! The meal was vile, but I had to go off in the middle of it to Jalogh to my Court martial.

Love to all the family from both of us.

Your affectionate brother
Dick

P.S. Address

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