

Love from Skomer to Bombay 1

10th September 1858

My Dearest Nelly,

I was so glad to have a letter from you although it brought me the sad news of your having been ill. I do hope you have by this time quite regained your strength. How very uncomfortable for you to have had ?

Are the Indian women so very useless? How I hope you will not have such another illness. Will you not remain in Bombay for a time when you return to it? Your letter came to me while I was in Tenby. I left the island with the Byders on the 19th. of August and stayed with them in Tenby a fortnight. I had lovely weather while there. I've walked out every day and driven to Manobier and Carew Castle. The country about Tenby is beautiful but you know I've ?

We came to London on Thursday the 2nd. of September and I remained with Aunt Byde till the Saturday when I came here. I walked with Emma to ? and bought a cloth ? arrived there on Sunday and ? came for me on Saturday and took me to the F ? station and booked me for Romford where I found ? He lives with Elizabeth and her husband near Shrewsbury. Papa has promised to go and stay with them in the spring but I shall not be surprised if he does not go. He cares little about leaving home. When you are able to write Nelly dear, will you send me a long account of yourself and how you liked your voyage to China and back. How you liked the natives in Bombay and tell me who are your friends there. What sort of person is Mrs. Rigby.? I ask of her for this reason. I mentioned her name once I think at Mrs. Lowndes and she said she had heard of a Mrs. Rigby, a widow in India, and from what she told me, if it be the same person, I should not care that you were very intimate with her. Do you ever see or hear anything of Marion Cole that was.? I forget her name now. Ann today is busy salting two pigs which were killed yesterday. Very likely the hams will go out to you. Jim is rabbit catching this winter, he thought of going to sea but I suppose he fancied the trapping better. Old Billy Dawkins is still here and Tom Stevens who came here the year before last. Hannah is remarkably stupid, she seems to have learned all she can and that is little enough. She is very careless, they none of them improve much on acquaintance. How do you get on with your servants? Have you any Europeans or are they all natives?

How I wish I could fly over to see you when you are settled in your home. Be sure you don't forget to tell me how your private trade turned out or rather in the dollars, also Vaughan's. I should like to know what he trades in. By the by, I have another grumble for you. Whenever you send anything home to Mrs. Lowndes (supposing you were to I mean), send it to them direct, not to Tom because Tom has to pay someone to get it through custom houses and Mr. Lowndes can send one of his clerks without having to pay extra. You must not mention this to anyone for no one knows I have written to you on the subject and if they did it might get me into trouble. Of course I only mean when you may happen to send anything exclusively to Mr. and Mrs. Lowndes.

I have not accomplished very much work lately but must try to make up for it now I am come home. I dare say it will be a long time before I leave the island again. I was away nearly five months. Was it not a long time? I think I must leave off now. I fancy

you will be tired of letter reading by the time you get through all this. Give my and Papa's kind love to Vaughan and tell him he owes me a letter. Papa writes with me in very much love to your dear self and with best wishes for your health and happiness.

I am ever my dearest Nelly, your affectionate sister,

Annie Robinson

P.S.

Since I closed your letter the boat has come in and brought us your letter and most welcome it was dearest Nelly. I am so glad indeed. I ought to say we are so truly delighted that you are once more safe in Bombay. May God prosper you Nelly dear and bring you safely through your troubles. Can you not give me an idea of when you expect the arrival? I hope Vaughan will get the command of a steamer. I suppose he would have better say and make a quick passage. It always seems to me when you are in Bombay that you are nearer to us. I wish it was not such an expensive journey, I could then go and stay with you. I would rather go to you my dear Nelly than anyone, but a hundred pounds would not be nearly enough to buy my clothes take me there and bring me back again.

Pilot is quite well again and all the rest. Papa gave Romp to Mr. Whittaker. Rabbit killing is not over yet, the number is not killed yet, not more than 6000 as yet. One of the bucks was found dead from fighting, it is supposed. The Philipps's have gone abroad, they have left East Hook. I had a letter from Aunt Louisa today. She enquired after you, they were so very kind to me during the time they were at Aunt Emma's with me. They gave me neck ribbons and a beautiful new sash and were very precious altogether.

Adieu, God Bless you my dear, dear little Nelly.

Letters from Annie Robinson to her sister Ellen Davies in India. Ellen had married Vaughan Palmer Davies in Bombay Cathedral in 1858. Transcribed by Ruth Downing from letters in the Vaughan Palmer Davies papers written in Victorian cross-script, deposited in the County Record Office, Haverford West, by Roscoe Howells.

Love from Skomer to Bombay 2

(29th January 1859).

By Annie Robinson

My Dearest Nelly,

Now that I am getting quite settled at Skomer again I am going to send you ? . I hope you have had the letter I sent you during my absence from home in proper time. I stayed with Aunt Emma from the 29th of Nov. to the 5th of Jan. when I came home and brought Graham with me. By the by, while I think of it , Mrs. George Robinson sent to Johnny to say that ? you are to be sure to go straight up to the house (which I may as well tell you is called " Bagatelle") that she will be very glad to see you. I enjoyed my visit very much. I met some nice people while I was away but I suppose you will consider me on the shelf for good when I tell you that I met no Mr. Wright but have come home quite content if it be ordained to end my days a lonely old maid. I do not say I would choose such a lot, but if it is chosen for me it is good and so let it be.

I went to see Uncle William and Mr. Evans and they both enquired very kindly after you. Mr. Evans gave me a brooch which he had brought for you, but did not know how to send it , so I said I would take charge of it. I hope you will receive it safely, I think it is a very good one. He also gave me the accompanying letter from Puff for you which it seems has been sent to India and come home again for want of postage. I spent a few days with the Thompsons, they are in good style but the houses in London are too high , it makes me puff to go up to my bedroom. They took me to Covent Garden to see the new opera Satanella and afterwards to a pantomime , the first I ever saw. I enjoyed it very much. I was at a large party the week before I went to stay, about 50 people. Tom was there and I introduced him to Mr. Say. As soon as Mr. Say discovered I was in the room he came up to me and expressed himself much pleased to see me. He led me and introduced me to his little wife in these words " I wish to introduce Miss Robinson, a very old friend of mine" !! He then disarranged some people in order to place a chair for me by her and left us.

Mrs. Say seems to be a nice person, they are building a beautiful house near Windsor called Oakley Court. I am to go and stay with them when they are settled in it , which they hope to be in the summer. I had such a wretched cold and cough that I did not enjoy myself as much as I should otherwise have done. I did not see Mr. or Mrs. Lowndes before I left for which I was sorry but it could not be helped. I was almost entirely confined to the house for nearly 3 weeks with a very bad cold and cough. I suppose you have by this time had your box of baby clothes and other things. I hope they reached you safe. Emily has frightened me, she says the moment is so great . I have no idea what it is but I doubt not you will be able to sell as many of your things as you do not care to keep very easily and for quite as much as you gave for them , perhaps a little more, seeing you have to pay the carriage of them out. Mind you tell me truly whether the baby clothes cost more than you intended, what you think of them and if you like them. Now Nelly dearest I am going to give you a little piece of advice. When you have occasion to send to Mrs. Lowndes to purchase anything for you , just give her an idea of how much money you wish to lay out because (this is of course entre nous) her ideas of economy and ours are not quite the same and she might

without knowing your circumstances spend £30 when you might only be able to lay out half that amount.

I know you will not mind this little hint from your sis although you are an old married lady (?) You know I only think of your interest when I say so. Oh Nelly dear, I cannot tell you how anxiously we are looking out for letters from you . I was delighted to hear from Emily that you had arrived safely in Bombay. I suppose you were too busy to write to me, as I have not had a letter. I shall be so glad if Vaughan gets the steamer, I dare say you will be able to write to us more frequently , if you do not go to sea every time. Papa sends his kind love to you , he is going to have some hams cured expressly for the Indian voyage. I hope those we sent before reached you in good order. The letter from Papa was to have gone by the last mail but I did not get it in time so I kept it for this. He is very busy now amongst the sheep. Lambs are arriving often , I think there are thirteen already. Mr. Warren Davies has given ? to Papa and there are two of the little beagles and Mrs. Davies`s three turkeys in here to be taken care of for them. They find it very dull in St. Omer , no society. The four elder girls go to school and come home every Sunday. The two boys take two of the servants with them, Charlotte the cook and a nursemaid whom you never saw.

Walter and his wife are left in charge of the house and whenever Papa wants to go to Haverfordwest he sends Mr. Warren and the basket carriage comes to the Haven and he goes direct to Haverfordwest sleeps there and comes back to the Haven next day. Very convenient is it not.? Topsy I believe is very well but not likely to have any family. I am afraid we shall find her very unprofitable.

The weather is most lovely for the time of year, so mild the fuschias and honeysuckle are budding out strong. I hope my garden will be very pretty this year. Puff is going to send me back a lot of beautiful plants. I have a row in her greenhouse. I would much like to know whether you can cultivate any plants for your own amusement in Bombay. Last night when the boat came in I had wedding cards of Marion Martin, (our cousin) she has married a gentleman rejoicing in the name of Cartwright. A very nice person I think. You set the example and were married in August 58, Marion goes next in August 59. I wonder who will go next. Time will show. I saw Aunt Ellis and all her children, a funny lot! They live close to Aunt Emma. I don`t remember whether I told you that Aunt Emma gave a large party in honour of me while I was there. It was a very nice one but it seems to me that I have told you before and as repetition is very stupid I will not say any more about it. Do you ever get any nice books to read any ? I mean let me know as I might be able to send you some if you cannot get them.

Poor old Miss Wilkins is going fast. I suppose she will not be alive much longer. Mr. William ? is dead. How much trouble seems to have come to that family all at once. People say he never recovered the death of his nephew George. I went out for a short walk yesterday for the first time since I've been home and I saw Topsy. She is getting quite wild. Ann is very well, she sends her kind love to you and says she supposes you will forget her as you have too many to think of and write to. Mr. Whittaker was staying here while I was absent. He looks just the same as ever I am told except his hair is grey and he wears a moustache.

