

Extracts of Letters discussing Food and Cooking

1801

[Elizabeth to Mother, October 17, 1801]

They modestly requested only a Rupee a piece for the two sheep but when they came they looked so long legged & lean that Mr: Gwillim gave them another rupee for pity & desired them to change them for fatter ones. They make stews of it, so lean does as well as fat. They call their stews Curry from the name of a leaf they put in them. They eat boiled [sic] rice for bread & the vegetables they stew with the meat. They drink no strong liquor: water is their beverage; but it may therefore be allowed them to pepper their stews very high, they eat very little animal food & the spice [words crossed out] is necessary to warm their stomachs – Medical people begin to find that Europeans do not require to have their dishes seasoned so highly as they used to have them – The spice being to the natives what our wine is to us, it is not necessary to take both.- It is curious to go through their markets the provisions are almost all vegetables [words crossed out] They have indeed a good deal of fish but in a street a mile long where every house is a shop or has a standing before it, chiefly vegetables [sic]. There will not be above one or two butchers with a kid or two cutting up, or a sheep. –

I am very much obliged to Ned & Nancy for the bacon & we have half a Gammon now I have desired Polly to say how useful it has been; only old Bacon will carry, this came as nice as it set out. –

[Mary to Mrs Symonds Madras Oct. 14 1801]

We have a great many native vegetables which are very good but altogether unlike any thing in England. The fruit also I think very good the mellons are not equal to those you have but the Pine apples are excellent the mango the plantain and the Calacca* I like very much the last of these makes a tart very much like goosberries [sic], having an agreeable tartness in it.

[*Calacca = *Carissa carandas* (Robert Wright, *Illustrations Of Indian Botany*, Volume 2, 1850)]

The Kitchens and other offices are built at a little distance from the house. These people are very excellent cooks but they have a very odd way of cooking all their utensils are very simple but elegant in their forms. The kitchen is a long narrow room with large arches in the wall formed like the mouth of an oven about 2 feet deep on this place they light a fire of sticks for roasting and the spits are turned by boys (12) who are apprentices to the cook. The boiling is generally done over Charcoal fires which are lighted in earthen pots and stand out in the garden on any convenient place. They boil and stew every thing in earthen vessels which they have of all sizes and various pretty shapes. These cooks are also very good confectioners and mak [sic] all sorts of mixtures of eggs milk and sugar as good as possible custards trifles &c The milk is remarkably rich here and eggs are very plentiful [sic]. The price of fowls is about 10 pence a couple for such chicken as you generally boil at home but they have here two other sorts of fowls the capons are as large as a very fat hen turkey and the other sort of full grown fowl is about the size of a Dorking fowl which you have in London. The largest size turkeys here are the most

monstrous things you can conceive and look like a mountain on the table: provisions are in general very cheap and so are the servants wages but the quantity of food you are obliged to put on your table and the number of servants you (13) are obliged to keep make houskeeping [sic] quite dear enough the servant who dresses your hair would on no account empty a washstand bason [sic] you must keep one for every purpose yet it is in this respect much worse in Bengall and other parts of India than it is here. We have a Butler to order the dinner a Compadore to go to the market to buy it he has two servants to carry it home the Butler has a second Butler under him & a man to write out his accounts and a servant to clean the plate. Each horse you keep has two servants who do nothing but attend to him, and if you keep Poultry there must be one for each sort as the same woman who takes care of ducks never interferes with the chicken &c

If you can get some muchrooms [sic] at any time a little ketchup or a few preserved apricots (17) we shall be much obliged to you for them, the two Gammons of Bacon Ned was so good as to give us have turned out very fine; one and the half of the other have been dressed for different companies here they were much admired and eat at Lunchines [sic] clean to the bone, Sir T Strange & Mr. Sullivan the other Judge, come every day whilst the first lasted. all sorts of English pickles are greatly valued in this country not only by the Europeans but also by the natives who steal them from you if they can get at them in any way and eat them privately, their (18) laws forbid them to eat or drink any thing which has been touched by an inferior (so that the cooking for them is always done by one of their own cast, this they strictly adhere to in all things they are indifferent about but their passion for these pickles is so great that they codescend [sic] to eat them tho made by us whom they account the lowest of all and class with the kamars or outcasts [word crossed out] one cannot trust the jar of Pickle even with the Butler but I am obliged to give out a little at a time in a saucer and to observe that it is brought to table for they cannot resist they have no vinegar in this country but what is brought from England & for that we pay about 6 shillings a quart as they could not afford to make them if they knew how.

[Mary to Hetty Madras Oct. 14, 1801]

If you are in the habit of making the preserves as we did formerly, it will not be taken amiss that you add a few pottles of fine high flavoured strawberries into your stewpan for us as that they turned out I think finer than any other of our prese[rves] but they are all very good, and great treasures here. They were only boiled into jam the same as Raspberries with a good deal of sugar,

Ps we did not forget the third of this month and we had a goose of Michaelmass day.

1802

[Betty to Mother: Madras Gardens Jan.23 1802]

one other tribe we have that come occasionally to the candles & these are very curious. They are the white ant which in their first state burough [sic] in the ground to the quantity of bushels, in this state when found and they are watched for, they are dug up & sold in the Bazer [sic]

(market) as we sell elvers or shrimps – They are esteemed a great delicacy, & all the people of the country are very fond of them for stews.

Christmas day is kept exactly like May day & every house & ever person is dressed with Garlands of flowers [words crossed out] boughs are fixed to the entrances of the houses, & people entertain their friends with green peas. French beans are here always all the year & are very good, of our kind: but their hedges are all full of a wild sort, or indeed, sorts, for there are several, little inferiour [sic] to our's, & tho' to be had all the year are now more abundant: They climb up every tree & bower over the hedges which are covered with the profusion of their flowers – sometimes white but more frequently pink or laylock [sic] & very beautiful. These beans are some of them shelled & boiled [sic] as broad beans & are not bad – others are used as we use our's but they are as broad as two fingers but however they cut them [word crossed out] as small & they are so much alike that I eat them several times without knowing nor shou'd I have known if I had not been told – but I thought them drier more meally – We have Potatoes only half the year, the New Potatoes are just come in they do not grow here but are brought from the Northward. –

I have eaten Asparagus (**052/26**) several times but they are miserable small straws They are very sweet & wou'd no doubt as a few do occasionally [sic] grow to a good size but they have been but lately introduced. Turnips & carrots are always to be had but they are small, the Cabbages are chiefly what we call cutters or cabbage plants but people who attend to their own gardens have cabbage but no broccoli or calli Cauliflower The Endive is large & as white as snow, beet root small Lettuces small,

Mustard, cresses, Radishes, mint in great abundance [word crossed out] onions, cucumbers, & spinach, sage also is good – and Parsley grows very well but the seed ought to be fresh from England at every opportunity for the seed will not do a second time – It is excellent the first time but the second it becomes like Chervil & after two or three times as rank as fennel the seed I brought out wou'd not grow it got damp by some means, but a Genⁿ [Gentleman] who came in the same Fleet brought some & I have had parsley from him & he has given me a bed ful [sic] of roots which do well – As the Parsley becomes fennel so the fennel gets as strong as anniced [sic]. – Thyme & Marjorem [sic] I have not seen & lost what I brought out dried – Here are an infinite number of vegetables of this country of some of which I am fond – Yams a large coarse kind of Potato & a very small sweet potato like frost bitten ones. – Greens & Sorrels of several sorts but what the natives chiefly use are the seed vessels of plants – almost all the plants & trees of the country are of the pea or bean shaped flower & yield produce Pods of various forms & these they use in their stews either shelled or young. The Tamirind [sic] is a large tree of this kind & is [word crossed out] as agreeable to them as any other (**053**) bean for they generally put lime juice into them or the acid of tamarinds. They [have] several things of the Cucumber & Gourd kind which are excellent stewed – & some other seed vessels. – As the Hedges & trees yield them so many things you may suppose their labour in gardening is not much – but they keep their beds neat enough for some few greens. Their Gardens look more like shrubberies with these flowering trees, which blow like laburnums & the bladder Senna, but some are very handsome which you have not seen & all blow profusely & have the lightest foliage waving in the air. – This country is now truely [sic] beautiful here is no spot uncultivated but is either used for Cocoa nut groves, mango groves, (or Orchards, you wou'd call them), – pleasure grounds, gardens or Rice fields –

The Rice looks exactly like thick crops of wheat & as yet I shou'd not have known it without plucking it, it is at present green – some [c]rops of Millet are cut in & some other small grains – There is a plant a kind of Bread fruit yielding a large fruit as big as a pine apple & with leaves not unlike a pine apple but soft & pliant & bending down – this has a wildness & grandeur in the look of it, particularly when it shoots up into trees, that is most delightful to a stranger – Wild sugar Cane & the Prickly Pear or Indian Fig are also used for hedging, –

Agriculture is carried on here in a manner just the reverse of your's and so is Gardening, for as you raise beds for the vegetables & leave a sunk path to walk round [sic] them, here they sink the bed about a hand-breadth, & the path round [sic] is raised. This is in order to retain the water which is of course much exhausted in the day. —

There are Verandoes [sic] at the back & front of the house & in these the dinner &c is generally laid the Other rooms are called [word crossed out] halls & are used as drawing rooms or sitting rooms – The dinners look very pretty laid out in these Verandoes [sic] open to the Garden & well lighted up. There is a balustrade between the Columns on which they set flowers &c The first dinner I saw I thought the it wonderfully pretty striking particularly from the immense number of servants waiting with such extreme stillness & so delicately dressed all in white muslins & white or figured turbans & large gold earrings [sic]. Besides ones own servants every body who dines with one brings one or two with him so that if we sit down twenty or three or four & twenty to dinner there are at least thirty servants waiting at table,

In this – place all the cooking is done on pans – of fire &c & at night they sleep on the – seats in the open part or verandoes [sic] unless it – rains when they use the close dark – rooms; for to exclude the heat they – also keep out the light. If the – house belong [sic] to a richer person – they have a small staircase which leads up to the same kind of place above in that case these Verandoes [sic] above have carpets on them & here they sit to do their work or to keep their accounts & use these upper dark rooms for sleeping & the under (061) parts are for the servants for cooking &c In such a house therefore the square wou'd be paved & no tree over it but the cooking & slop water thrown over it which is drained off but serves to keep it cool. – beyond this square there is another, which is a kind of yard where the Cows &c are kept & sometimes a Garden beyond, but their gardens are more frequently a mile or two from the towns in places appropriated to that use.

In order to finish this so far as it goes I may as well fill the paper by telling you what I had omitted that the white ants have in each nest one as large as the end of a finger which is called the Queen ant. As soon as a man find [sic] this he pops it into his mouth her Majesty being esteemed a particular delicacy. She is said to taste like a lump of thick cream or marrow. –

[Betty to Hetty: Madras Gardens Feb. 7 1802]

If a Cattymaran [sic] comes to shore which they generally do we buy fish of them & by this means I have seen a great variety of fish that I shou'd never other wise have seen for they never bring from the markets any but a few particular kinds – all the rest go by the name of Palankeen [sic] boys fish, which is indeed all the name I can get for any of them – Many of them are very nice & more to my taste than the other kinds but they are smaller sorts of fish

much like little trout & lasprings & there is a small kind the same as white-bait [drawing of a fish] about a penny a plateful [word crossed out] These they dress [word crossed out] very nicely they stick them on bents through the head & then fry them quite stiff & they look excessively pretty & eat the same as white bait. There is another kind much more like an Anchovy then [sic] our sprats are & I think they are anchovies besides these there are many curious fish – such as the Ink Ink fish & others which I shou'd not like to eat but I buy (074) for about 8 pence or 10 pence as many as I like for my self and a days provision for the nine Palankeen [sic] boys who are ready enough to run with me along the Beach to St. Thomé & back for such a treat.

Mr. Gwillim has not failed [sic] to eat fish above one day in twenty since he came here. We have no lobsters here but we have Prawns as large as the tail of a midling [sic] lobster & exactly the same but there is no inside to them, but we mix some crab with it & it makes very fine lobster like sauce. We have shrimps all sizes & another thing very unlike any creature I ever saw The first I saw at table I thought they had been made in sweetmeat & varnished. They are very nice but so little to eat & take so long a time to get at that little that they are not much worth much: however they are sweeter than any of the other kinds they are neither crabs prawns, nor lobsters they [have] no tail nor claws large enough to eat & only a body so what is, is like the inside of a lobster – They boil to a pale pink The children catch these & small crabs along the shore as they run about the sand; whilst their fathers are fishing – these things look very pretty in a dish & make fine soup [drawing of sea creature] or Curry. – Mr. G enjoys it exceedingly when we get any new fish or vegetable which by going about I bring home

Mr: G. asks them why they did not bring us any fish we have got by accident. They always say “Gentlemen cannot eat that fish” – Then he [word crossed out] [asks] them if they can eat it, yes they say, black people very much like that but gentlemen can't eat, no custom, to bring gentlemen however [?] – but they are extremely pleased to see you eat any of their kind of things & since they discover our wish [to] try it all they are constantly bringing some new kind of Vegetable, many of which are very excellent – of fruit for tarts they have a great variety quite as good as goose berries or apples. – There is certainly one very pleasant thing in the servants they all enter into your pursuits they are constantly bringing me flowers & insects & pointing out things to me as we go along. – They have some extraordinary notions of grandeur, Hares are very plen[tiful] [word missing] here, but rabbits are dear, a hare costs about [words missing] & a rabbit eight shillings for there are none but [word missing] some gentlemen keep & so far as I find must be stolen before you can buy them. – We by means of some directions got the hares dressd [sic] so much in our own way that I wished to have one for company & desired among the rest it might appear cooked in that stile [sic], however it was not brought, & as I had observed the butler was disturbed when I told him to [word crossed out] get it – I enquired why it had not been done – Upon which he said he was very sorry but the Cook & he had both agreed that all the company wou'd laugh if a Country hare was brought to so handsome a dinner, but he promised me the next time he wou'd not fail to get a rabbit. They always call them by way of contempt Country hares & I believe are perfectly convinced that it is from stinginess that I order them & I have never so far prevailed [sic] as to have one for company. (076) They have a great pride in setting out the dinner because every body brings his own servant with him & it is matter of conversation – They spare no pains in dressing it with flowers & my plateau & figures are just to their taste. I am glad I brought out China desert [sic] set for here is so much glass that tho' it costs so much they do not value it & here is no china except mine & a few things
Sr. Tho^s Strange has – both that & my Wedgwood have been admired beyond everything, For

except Lord Clives I do not see any Wedgwood but what looks as if it had been bought in Covent Garden. As well for pattern as shape.

[Mary to Hetty, Madras, Feb 11, 1802]

I don't think I ever told you any thing about the fruit of this country, I must (90) own I was disappointed in them at first the flavours are so different from any thing I had been used to, and in general so very powerfull [sic]. I am now quite reconciled to them and I like them nearly as well as the English. We have two or three sorts of oranges the sort most esteemed is very high flavoured but not very juicy another which I prefer is sweet and very full of juice but not much flavour, a third sort (the worst of all) seems to be something betwen [sic] a China and a Seville orrange [sic] the pines and mellons [sic] are exactly the same as in England. One of best fruits is the pumplemoos which is the same as the shaddock of the West Indies you may have seen them as they are sometimes carried home from there they grow about the size of a large mellon [sic] and are in fact a great overgrown orrange of a very fine sort the Mango is very much admired and is a very fine fruit also is very high flavored and I think very agreeably [sic], but those who dislike them say they are like turpentine tow and treacle tied up in a rag and sucked. The guava is shaped like a codling its texture is exactly a mellow pear and it has something of the flavour of strawberries. The plantains grow in large clusters sometimes above twenty in a bunch each plantain is about 6 inches (91/pg. 46 folio) long and an inch and half in diameter. This is the most common sort which is white but there are a great many varieties of them they differ in size and colour some are green and some red but they all grow alike in clusters in this manner [drawing of plantain cluster here] it is unlike any thing in England in its taste and I am very fond of it

I want to tell you of a curious fruit which I forgot before; it is called a rose apple by the Europeans, it is the size and colour of an apricot but it has an eye like a medler [sic] of a delicate green the texture is exactly an apricot and when you break it open it is loose from the kernell [sic] as the apricot is when over ripe the taste is exactly roses and sugar most elegantly mixed and not too sweet, the kernell is green, (with a very thin brown shell) and tastes the same as the green part [?] of a rose bud, it has just that astringency, and the crispness of it.

[Betty to Hetty: Madras Gardens Feb.12 1802]

He has been remarkably well & was getting fatter, but the truth is he wou'd not let well alone, For being so well he thought nothing wou'd hurt him & being very fond of Malt liquor he drank a bottle of ale every day for 6 weeks or two months, which every body says is very (095/48) bad in this country & it is not one in a hundred can bear it to mend all he drank milk three mornings & I assure you he eats very hearty – at last he got very uneasy & took some Rhubarb &c but that only stirred up the bile – he was ill six days & was obliged to take some rummagers [?] but thank God I do not think he looks the worse for it – he has now a great charge neither to drink beer nor milk – The custom here is to rise at 5 or [word crossed out] Winter at 6 in the morning – to have a tiffin at one & to dine at 7 oClock & go to bed at ten Mr: G. has a great aversion as you know to eating before dinner – he used to take nothing but a cake & I took half my dinner at tiffing time & half at 7 oClock this mode agrees with nobody everyone cries out against it but nobody alters it Lady Clive & a few others tried much but she cou'd only get leave to eat her

own dinner at three oClock, nobody wou'd leave off this odious custom so as to comply with dining out at [word crossed out] her hour indeed they have so ordered all sorts of office business that it can now hardly be done – It disagreed with both of us & therefore we have begun upon a new plan I believe there may be half a doz[en] families who do the same we have no tiffing & dine regularly at 3 oClock. we have our Coffee between 5 & 6. & if we have company or dine out we consider it as supper for tho' it is called 7 oClock it is near 8 before we sit down & ten when we rise from table at which time everybody runs home or out to Balls. – [words crossed out]

This mode of life is quite comfortable to me. only when I sup out I fancy myself at your friends in Oxford Street for we have Turkeys [sic] that you cou'd not see over – round of Beef boiled [sic] roast Beef, stewed beef Loin of Veal for a side dish & roast pig – Capons as large as Hen turkeys [sic] & in short a scandalous waste of provisions – or rather of our money for there are enough ready to eat the food – very few things are dear –

[Betty to Hetty: March 18, 1802]

Polly wrote to you to send me some more dishes &c the same as our dinner set, we do not want plates but a great many dishes all sizes. one soup Tureen & it must be the best shape – the tall sort – sallad [sic] bowls & vegetable dishes – no sauce boats – one plate each person goes through the dinner here it is laid at first but they all use China water plates which are set on the plate & these water plates are changed – They keep kettles of water boiling [sic] outside the house to fill the plates constantly. – I want also from Wedgwoods' – 2 doz[e]n plates to match my breakfast set – one doz[e]n small dishes of different shapes for fruit which is always set here at breakfast — 12 breakfast cups & sawcers [sic] & 12 coffee cups with Muffin plates or any little things but no Chocolate cups – several slop basins, & bread & butter plates I will draw a bit of the pattern but I fancy they know it for I told them to write it down – I do not know whether Polly mentioned it before but I want from the Derby China Warehouse 12 plates to match my desert [sic] set & 12 dishes. The dishes must be 4 of each shape for corners. –

At first I did not know how to order the dinner, however I find now that Seasons are only considered in Vegetables – & in very few of those, most of the fruit trees bear blossoms & fruits at the same time. The plantains of all kinds are always growing, Mellons [sic] are not quite in yet – The favourite fruit of the country is the Mango & the Mango trees are now in full blow smelling very fresh & nice The orchards look like Walnuts or Pear trees but the flower is a large spike of small blossoms like Madow Meadow-sweet – There are as many sorts of Mangos as of apples & as much difference in them. I like them unripe in tarts they are like a fine green apple – but I fear I shall not like them ripe again as I was ill after eating them.

The smallest things that ever were when we went in we found a table of fruits &c & among the rest some mangos for which he was famous – & of which he pressed me to eat – In shape & colour they were exactly like apricots but as large as a small Mellon – The texture is like a very juicy plum of the flavour much like Mellon, Pineapple & Apricot mixed together, certainly very delicious but too rich – I did not eat much but I never have been able to eat any since – whether it was from (105/53) the heat or the mango I know not, or both together but I got a most compleat [sic] sick headach [sic] which lasted me two days & the poor man was so much

censured for his imprudence that I believed he never wou'd be free from the reproaches thrown upon him –

[Mary to Hetty March 18 1802]

We are much obliged to you for your kind thought of the apricots and other sweetmeats, whenever you can conveniently send things of that nature. They will be very acceptable as will a few bottles of different colour sugar plumbs [sic] you will get a great variety of those kind of things at Tringham's in Holborn he will sell them very cheap if you get Dick Hodges to order them for you at the wholsale [sic] price, or he will sell them so to you. I dare say, if you buy them in John Gwillims name you need not fear overstocking us with them as they are much admired here and are always put on the table when there is any company.

[Betty to Mother: July 16 1802]

The ceremony from which the festival takes it's name of Pongall, which signifies boiling [sic], is the chief. For some weeks the Bazars [sic] which are kept in places like the Parks in London represent just what an English Fair wou'd if it was kept in those places – Round abouts & Up & Downs and such like sports – with standings of trinkets & sweet meats – The Pots they use are of red earthen ware & on this occasion the red ware is spread on the ground in profusion. It consists is chiefly of large pots or Vases from 5 to 10 gallons measure. The parents or elder relatives give to the younger ones on this occasion one of these pots filled with rice, sugar green ginger, turmerick [sic] & a large quantity of sugar-cane fresh cut – the green leaves hang out at the top of the Jar & round the neck of it is tyed [sic] long wreaths of flowers of a golden yellow strung together in their way. These yellow flowers are the ornament for three months of the year. It was curious to observe for some weeks, whichever way one went to meet people carrying these large pots so elegantly adorned with wreaths of flowers – On [word crossed out] arrival of one where it is to be presented the wife takes the flowers & dresses her head with them the children take the sugar-cane – & the rest is for the boiling [sic] or Pongall which is rice, milk, & sugar in this new pot. It must be performed with great care & the rice well picked, cleanliness occuring to produce the best sign of good luck. If the Pot mantles well & rises high & white, the year, it is supposed will be favourable but if the boiling is checked or the scum appears discoloured (**130**) nothing but ill is to be expected during this season the compliment on the meeting of friends, is not like our's [sic] how do you do? – but how was your boiling? –

During these feasts the great cause of tranquility is the sobriety of the people those of Cast never drink any kind of liquor spirit or fermented liquor, but besides this they are naturally very mild in their dispositions drunkenness they [word crossed out] detest to a degree you can hardly conceive – their shops are just like the stalls in Covent Garden with ranges of fruit in some in others confectionary which they make in very pretty & in a great variety of shapes but with little variety of taste flour, sugar, clarified butter Cashew nuts in the way of almonds & sometimes Cardamum seeds like sugar plumbs the worst is they are fond of mixing a little musk which is to us intolerable & generally the best sort are covered with silver leaf & all are very greasy.

The ships destined for China & Bengal have sailed [sic] from this place & we have made enquiry without effect the letters not mentioning what has been sent – I fear our things are gone (141/71) to China by which means they will be lost or go back to England. but one of the Mates of the United Kingdom who dined with us tells us he thinks it likely the boxes are still in England as unless some person delivers them & takes a receipt [sic] from the officers they are frequently left in the Warehouses - Therefore if the Preserves & Mr: James' box were sent we shall be glad if he will enquire where they are –

[Betty to Hetty: August 23, 1802]

There is one difference in the heat of this country & England That in days when by the thermometer the heat is extreme we feel no loss of appetite [sic] on the contrary people eat exceeding The land wind is much like our oppressive days in England & takes off appetite [sic]. but the fine clear days with the Sea air when it is extremely warm a hot dinner tho large has not a disgusting appearance as it seems to have in England – one thing is that with so many doors open & windows unglazed we are not distressed by the smell of the meat as in England in close rooms –

[Betty to Hetty: September 14, 1802]

The heat of the weather is abated here now & my Garden is in good order I have four large beds of French beans but not yet in flower & they are to be sold in the bazars however the season is that the people were busy with the building & our gardening was not begun till late my French beans are almost all dead for want of rain never was such a season known – I am glad you bought me some confectionery that I brought out with (161/81) me answered amazingly well candied & sugar plum things are sold here very dear a Pint decanter of Candied almonds or Carraways are two Pagodas – My *Tolu Lozenges & [word crossed out] Mint seeds have lasted 'till now & I shall be glad always to have Tolu Lozenges sent not in Boxes but from Tringhams by the pound, they have been most [usef]ul [letter damaged] to me & the mint seeds – I have also still som[e] [b]lack currant drops that have kept extremely well & are very good. I owe you a thousand thanks for thinking of them. –

[*Tolu lozenges were made from tolu balsam, which is tapped from the living trunks of *Myroxylon balsamum*, a tree native to South America.]

[Betty to Hetty: October 18, 1802]

we send by Mr: Templar a jar of Preserved Nutmegs for you & two jars of Ginger done at home but I am not sure you will ever (178) have them for the jars were all over set in the surf of the Sea & some I understand broke. – I sent with the jars some for Mr: Templar's use.

[Mary to ? 1802?]

Christmas in many respects is kept in Madras as May day is kept in England. The temperature of the air & the fresh verdure of the grass & trees after the rains, together with the flowers which

abound in this Season enables them to do this; the whole country indeed appears extremely like England in a fine warm May, but with this advantage that they have many ripe fruits

During breakfast time the Servants of the family their children (boys) & all people who are employed about the house come in with presents of Fruit & flowers everyone brings something [sic] however small but flowers always make a part if not the whole.

1803

[Betty to Hetty, February 1803]

The seeds (the letter excepted) were the only part of the things I was very anxious about & seeds ought to be here before Xmas, or else they are too late to sow— our rains are in Nov:r therefor Dec: & Jan:y are to us what June & July are to you. In these months we eat peas & french beans, Cabbages, carrots, turnips, lettuces of all kinds in perfection —as to fruits; the oranges are here in high perfection at this time Dec:r Jan:y & Feb: being the season of oranges of every description— for we have various kinds tho' none I think, better than yours.—

[Mary to Hetty: February 7th, 1803]

Our gardens are of this time in perfection for vegetables we have every day abundance of green peas french beans young potatoes very fine Sallads Carrots turnips & several [sic] sorts of greens, all this you will think very fine whilst you are choeking [sic] over a dirty coal fire, & glad to put up with a good pease pudding or a dish of meally potatoes, but our sorrows come on as yours go off & in May & June when you are refreshed by every beautiful [sic] flower & fine temperate weather we are scorched up with a burning land wind & have scarcely a (019) blade of grass left in exposed situations it is here we have then fine fruits to relieve us & the trees are always green,

[Betty to Hetty: February 15th, 1803]

we eat the last of our two great Cheshire Cheeses a few days ago & the last bit was better than the first – I wish I had two other such. – I beg my best thanks to Ned & Nancy for their kind present of Bacon & I hope notwithstanding the delays that I shall have it good –

[Betty to Mother: February 12/22, 1803]

The last ship was six months a most unusualy [sic] long time and I had been so long without letters that I really tremble to open them. — I have been again disappointed of my things but from what I hear I hope they will no be lost – I fear my sweetmeats will be rather ancient – & it is a great amusement to Mr: Gwillim to talk of our new fashions which we have heard of so long & are not arrived – I made a great bustle to provide myself when I came out & it was well I did, for I have never repented of anything I brought with me. – we eat the last of our two great Cheshire Cheeses a few days ago & the last bit was better than the first – I wish I had two other such. – I beg my best thanks to Ned & Nancy for their kind present of Bacon & I hope notwithstanding the delays that I shall have it good –

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Esther “Hetty” Symonds James, no date. Elizabeth’s birthday is 21 April 1803; internal evidence suggests the letter is written spring 1803]

I wish you had some good Moringas to eat well stewed or cou’d see the tree, a lovely object, waving, light as air – sweet flowers – & the long pods we stew & they are as nice as asparagus not that they are alike but as much to be longed for – If you & Lizzy don’t get me a tree I shall be very angry I wish I knew the Latin name – well I will tell you in the next letter (if it have a name) – & you must see & remember it. – The root scraped is our Horse raddish [sic] & excellent. –

They are (there is little doubt) the same people as the Gypsies in England, part of them ensnare birds & beasts & are wonderfully ingenious in imitating the cries of different animals to entice them part of them gather leaves used in the Curries & bringing (20) them into the towns cry them as our people wou’d along the streets; but instead of money exchange with the inhabitants for rice – Curry is the name of cooking with them & pilly signifies leaves – so they cry Curry pilly vankilliko! – will you buy my Curry leaves I ...

[Betty to Mother: May 7th, 1803]

I find you did not admire the taste you had of our vegetables at Brompton – I know now what it was you had – it is but a bad substitute for spinach – I use the young leaves of it for sallad [sic] as sorrel. – Every sort of English vegetable grows here in perfection except for Windsor beans Cauliflowers and artichokes – & these grow in Bengale but the natives do not understand the culture of our things & therefore it is only where the master of the house understands & watches the garden that things are good – We are but just begining [sic] to understand it I have a vast many fine cabbages but they are not yet fit to cut they grow short & close & so fine a bloom upon the leaf that they look (cook?) quite comfortable indeed we have so many screaming birds to pick up every grub & fly that our vegetables have never a bitten leaf – we have no trouble to wash from insects – I forgot to tell Hetty to send me bags from Covent Garden of herbs constantly – mint grows here well & so does sage but it is not exactly like ours – but Thyme [word crossed out] Marjorem [sic] I have not tasted since I came here I will beg of her therefore always to put me up a small bag of both & a little Parsley & Baum [sic] – savory I do not like – I like the Lemon Thyme best but both are good.

[Elizabeth to Hetty August 14, 1803]

Next Mrs: Chamber’s damsons are excellent – but her Walnuts too hard so that being generous – I put those for the company (5) & have opened your’s to give Mr: Gwillim one now & then – you know it his only pickle & if the shell is hard he cannot bite them & Mrs: C’s were too old she told me so in a letter but she cou’d get no other. Of her things I shall say no more here as I shall write to her. – Next Mrs: Whitleys apricots are the very best that ever were eat but the currant jelly is not good at all – But the apricots are exceeded by nothing but the strawberries you made me which are so delicious that they scent the room as indeed do the Rasberries [sic] – all your sweetmeats are the finest I ever eat – not the least fretted – except the apricot which is a little I shou’d have thought it very good but most likely she getting her fruit fresh off the tree

they became harder. – You have no idea how pleased the people here are to smell strawberries such numbers of people who came out boys -& have not seen any – they are not to be bought here without buying them in large cases with many other things & then it is only one small Pot – I have given a few away to my very best friends – treated all the company who have come with a fine dessert & I believe I am not a little envied – I never was a picker before but really when I eat those strawberries I feel as if I was back in England & it is such a pleasant fancy (6) to indulge now & then – that I frequently rob the Pots tho' Mrs: Mary who by the way begins to be a little Tabithaish warns me that things will not last for ever & desires me to recollect that I cannot have my cake & eat it &c &c

But above all things the herbs you sent me are most agreeable & have been the occasion of my eating many hearty meals that I shou'd have gone without this hot (7) weather. I was almost longing for some knotted Marjorem [sic] & if you had desired to favour me ever so much you cou'd not have given me such a treasure – The Marjoram retains its flavour so well as if it was just picked but the thyme Thyme has scarcely any taste but that need not prevent you from sending both lemon & orange Thyme another time for it may be accident however the sage loses its flavour so much that we are obliged to put a handful into a duck what flavour it retains puts us in mind of home; whereas the sage that grows here is the tree sage & has a very different taste. All the Herb seeds Mr: Whitley sent me I have tried in all ways & given them to other people but I never cou'd get one to grow nor ever hear of one that did however I do not despair & hope to try again in the Monsoon As for mint – I used to have great difficulty about but I learned at the mount how to manage it by cutting it down short frequently & now I have as large as your dining room as green as grass thriving in [?] all this land wind & I think it is nearly as well flavoured as in England – Sage & Marjoram & Thyme you will please to send by every opportunity. – as also Parsley seed & red Radish seed. – I am quite amazed at your skill in pickling – such charming green cucumbers. It is very extraordinary (8) but we have none of those small cucumbers here a few large ones are produced & the roots are burnt up. They are very nice indeed. I value them much & very rarely give out any – We were all very glad to see the red cabbage but I fear it will not do to send out – except to eat directly for when we opened the jar it was red & fine as possible but it turns directly black & soft by being exposed to the air. –

[Elizabeth to Hetty, September 3/4/10, 1803]

3 Gammons of Bacon appeared indifferently being so much rubbed as to have nearly lost the outer Rhine [sic] but on cutting two of them we have found the meat perfectly good & as red & white as ever with however as you may suppose a considerable loss of rancidness [?] on the outside – The ham seems quite dry & will I hope be good. — The worst account I have to give is of the sweet meats. Impatient of so long a [word crossed out] confinement two or three pots [words crossed out] had broke their prisons & escaped – The jam in the pots had lifted up the tops of several pots but it is not bad – it is as good as that Mrs: Whitley made but quite unlike your's – two bottles of Cappilair had fermented & the corks had fled out — A few of the lozenges are pretty good & some of the lemon & barberry drops but the Sugar-plums presented the most dismal appearance: all their paints, red, blue, & green in a streams like a marble paper cover of a book – Richard Clarke has been very happy as he was freed from the usual restraints upon the arrival of sweet meats, he had now no charge, but not to make himself sick – Polly tells

me she has written to you by the Wellesley particulars of the other things & has therein desired you to pack dry sweetmeats that is almonds carraways lozenges &c in tumblers bladderd [sic] down. – The wet sweetmeats that is gooseberry hops cherries called dried Cherries, & currants &c I do not wish to have as we have plenty of things of that kind. – And I shall take your advice & write to Mrs: Chambers to do me no more. Rasberries [sic], strawberries & apricots are the only fruit I wish for or that are desirable here (092/143) I shall tell her if she can send me some Welsh Cranberries to do them. When I asked her to do them it was because I really feared you never cou'd have time & really now I am rather unhappy about it. I fear you do too much. –

[Elizabeth to Hetty, nd, 1803]

I have had letters from them & Whitley – you are very saucy about our plants – you eat the leaf & you ought to have eaten the seed vessel – Polly is stupid & thought you meant another thing. – I wish you had some good Moringas to eat well stewed or cou'd see the tree, a lovely object, waving, light as air – sweet flowers – & the long pods we stew & they are as nice as asparagus not that they are alike but as much to be longed for – If you & Lizzy don't get me a tree I shall be very angry I wish I knew the Latin name – well I will tell you in the next letter (if it have a name) – & you must see & remember it. – The root scraped is our Horse raddish [sic] & excellent. –

[Mary to Hetty: August 19, 1803]

All the sweet meats you made are remarkably fine I never saw any so beautiful, and so are Mrs. Whitleys apricots the flavours is just as good as when they were first done I am sure, and not the least fermentation your strawberries and in short all your presents have kept the flavour the same as the first day. I hope you will not mention what I now say as all was well meant [?] but in truth Mrs. Whitleys raspberries have fermented & lost their flavour, for want of sugar, but the apricots make amends for all they are just as my mother used to do them quite clear & firm. Mrs Chambers's damsons came remarkably good, and I must not omit to tell you how acceptable your two bottles of goosberries [sic] were they were quite a treat to me, I have brought out only one bottle yet I made two tarts with it for particular company.

I must say you are the very best housekeeper I know your pickles are beautiful as well as your preserves indeed all your things are the best for poor Mrs. Chambers has been cheated in her wallnuts they are too old & have hard shelles [sic] inside but yours are in perfection & your cucumbers [sic] are [word crossed out] as green as a ribbon.

Be so good as to tell Tringham, to pack all the sugarplums, in glass, if he puts them in tumblers & corks them or covers them with bladder they will come dry & the tumblers will be very acceptable, but don't put them in decanters (071) because they are of no use here. The damp of a ship is too great to send them in boxes as many of them were all run away and others were stuck together in lumps the almonds were all in one & so were the barbary sugarplums however they are just as good to eat tho not so handsome for the table. I think it is not worth while to send capilaire it is too sweet to be grateful in this hot country. The Raspbery [sic] vinegar is much admired, and a few bottles of Brandy Cherries would be very acceptable as also a few

bottles of Noyau [?] & Cherry brandy the Noyau [?] Betsy brought at Gunter's in Berkeley Square has been very much admired you could order half a dozⁿ bottles some day in your way to Brompton.

[From Elizabeth to her Sister, Esther "Hetty" Symonds James, September 3/4/10, 1803]

– at twelve o'clock comes Luncheon time, as we call it Tiffin, – we are ready to faint for food – indeed if I have been detained I often do, in the extreme heat – after this meal we are so oppressed with heat that it is quite a force to do anything – at this moment I am writing after Tiffin [sic] – at 3 o'clock we dress at 4 we dine, sometimes sleep a little between Tiffin & dinner but I never do it if I can keep up. – between five & six we go to walk about the garden to see it watered & seeds sown or else we go out airing – whic[h] is all the exercise we have. – If we walk in the garden; we drink tea & go out at eight o'clock (15) to make visits & as the places are so far from one another we do not get home till near eleven at night – If we go our airing at 6 o'clock we have sometimes a little time for writing in the evening, but it is not to be depended upon Visitors may come in or we dine out – or we have company, large or small is an equal hindrance – or there is a ball. –

[Mary to Hetty Madras Sept 10th, 1803]

Betsy has written you an account of the safe arrival of the long looked for parcels which came by the Union, it is to me wonderful to see how well the things have all kept, one of the Gammons of Bacon was (107) dressed on Monday last for a very large party [words crossed out] (all the gentlemen of the profession to whom the Judges give an annual dinner,) the Bacon was admired beyond any thing at the table and they all said they thought it far preferable to the finest Ham. A few of the jam pots had lost thier [sic] tops and some corks had blew out of the capilaire the sugar plumbs and carraways had suffered as I have already told you the last did, not from keeping but from being packed in paper instead of glass, henceforth you will have them put in tumblers and wound with bladders;

what was still worse the supper, & the building which contained it were washed away, there was poor Mr. Cockrane at the head of about a hundred black servants, trying to save something from the wreck but they gathered up custards, whiped [sic] sillabubs, Sandwiches, & bunches of flowes [sic], all mixed together at last however it was discover'd that a great deal more supper had been prepared than the tables would hold & with that & the fruit which was not injured, they made one handsome table inside the house which was quite enough for all. These things are part for shew as nobody ever eats a lot

[Mary to Hetty October 20, 1803]

All your Jams & jellies keep amazingly well & Sir Henry is very fond of a lick [?] particularly the strawberry [word missing] make excellent custard pudding [word missing] you add a little jam as a great improvement to them, we have had custard pudding at least 4 times a week ever since we came into this country, I own I am a little tired [?] of them, & therefore somtimes [sic] order another not [?] by way of [?] society, but as soon as it comes on the table he says,

sure tis very hard I never can have that [?] pudding I am so fond of the other day I said I feared the (damp?) of the weather would spoil some of the sweetmeats,

[Mary to Hetty n.d. 1803]

You asked me in one of your letters what sort of pickles would be most desirable & I assure you that Mr James's notion was very right for I have never seen a red cabbage since I came into this country. I have been told they grow in India but it is not hereabouts, wallnuts [sic], cauliflowers & mushrooms are never to be had here except what are sent from England & capers are always sent out. I am very happy to have the pleasure of telling you that some of the things you have had the trouble of sending are arrived

You have had wrong information about sending things from Bengall to us for I assure you if any parcels are taken there by mistake or otherwise it will be six months at least before [—word cut off—we?] get them away but it is more often the case that they are lost altogether unless we have notice of thier [sic] being there by letter with the make of the ship & the description of the packages & we can then write to some friend to enquire for them. If packages are not enquired for in a certain time they are sold as Sir Henrys porter has been.

1804

[Mary Symonds to Unknown recipient. Possibly a copy in a good hand?]

Madras St. Thomé

Feb. 10, 1804

I wrote to you by the Glory a Ship that sailed [sic] from this place 7 or 8 weeks ago , & in it I thanked you for the things you so kindly did for me but that ship sailed so soon after I had unpacked them that I cou'd not give you the account I wished. had we opened the things that had not opened themselves on the Voiage [sic] we should have spoiled what was good, and I expected there wou'd be but little. I have now the pleasure to say that all my pickles and Ketchup came in perfect order. The Ketchup is as fresh as a mushroom from the field, and we eat it every day with our fish. The Sea runs close to us & repays us for it's [sic] noisy roaring in the night, by fresh fish every day which we see caught, at least we see the boats that are employed in the business ...

I am sorry for the trouble you have had about the Currant Jelly but I find that I need not trouble any of my friend for preserve in future, as I becomes more acquainted with the country I find the less need of them the ladies who come to this country are of necessity often changing their place & those who know are not here to to [sic] tell us what they discover __

I find now that the Mango fruit, used green makes the finest Jelly I ever eat in **(066)** my life it will not keep above a month but the trees bear more or less all the year & we of course do not want currant jelly for there is not the least difference between the flavors of this & white currant Jelly we have Colaccas for tarts much superior to Goosberries [sic] & several other fruits of the

same nature particularly one called Billimby & another called Aranelly besides which the green Mangoes make us apple puddings & pies every day. In puddings they are very much like & I tell the young men when they first come that they are our Indian apples, they are like a codling when it is very young & the boys do not discover the difference between the Mango & the apple...

The Mushroom catchup & pickles are of great value to us as we have no vinegar that will make them good, if we had the Walnuts & Mushrooms, neither of which we can get, and the Vinegar is excessively bad except what comes from England which is so valuable & the Country Vinegar so cheap, that the people always adulterate it with Toddy Vinegar, a kind of Arrack vinegar which has a tast [sic] perfectly offensive__

My sister has promised to do me a few Raspberries [sic] & strawberries & damsons which are certainly flavours that we have nothing to compare to but being as wise as I am now, I only wish to trouble my friends for pickles & those three kinds of fruit I am (067/213) most exceedingly [sic] obliged to you for the trouble you have had which I am now ashamed to think of.__

[Mary to Hetty Madras February 28, 1804]

The collection of things you sent us has been a constant source of amusement to us, besides the satisfaction we have in wearing, eating &c &c we are every now & then surprised with some new discovery sometimes [sic] in unrolling a piece of ribbon when we get off half the quantity out pops a beauty of another sort which we never expected to see, and the other day only, I discovered a packet of mottoes amongst the confectionary, to be sure they were a little mouldy from having lain so long under some fruit lozenges which were damp

[Mary to Hetty, August 12 1804]

The milinery [sic], five irons, and the Pickles, Ketchup & Raspberry vinegar, are all in excellent order: but the preserves, I am sorry to say have suffered much: Mr. Biss tells me the ship was constantly rooling [sic] and full of water, which was the cause of the sweetmeats fermenting many of the pots were broke and others had lost thier [sic] tops: but those which were put in stone jars and corked down came safe.

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Henrietta "Hetty" Symonds James, August 13, 1804]

All the bottles of Catchup [sic] & Pickles are come safe being in bottles &c – and the upper rows of the preserves but all the under rows were washed out & many of the Pots as clean as they cou'd have been washed –

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds October 12, 1804]

All we (5) ["no 2" written top right corner] have of them are two called water carriers the one is called the house water woman a filthy creature & quite common, whose business it is to sweep all the rooms, which she does with a whisk stooping down, as indeed they do all their work (they

never put a long handle to any broom or spade) – She must also wash the earthen ware bottles that hold the spring water & carry it from the large jars to the doors of the rooms &c The other is called the Cook-room water woman – her office is somewhat [sic] like that of a kitchen girl except that she does no cooking, but the Curries which are her business & the Cook does not interfere – This woman we seldom see as the cooking is performed in a place a hundred yards from the house where we cou'd not go in the heat of the day & at night these two go home to their families

But to proceed we have a Pariah man a Cook & he has a Maty They kill & they skin & feather & do everything in a strange way they cook immense dinners all in earthen Saucepans & earthen frying pans, they have everything to prepare & no one convenience the[y] keep some naked Pariah children who turn the spit & are paid by scraps. The Cook has four & his Maty two pagods [sic] a month, My maid has 3 pagodas a month & the water women one Pagd: each a month – and now I have come to an end of the servants who do anything in the house –

The rest of our servants ought to be called by some other name, for they are of no use in the house – There are nine Palankeen boys, who according to the custom of this place do nothing but bear the Palankeen. They live in a hut of leaves at the end of the garden – & receive 18 Pag^o a month between them They live upon a quarter part of it & save the rest They are a fine handsome set of men of the Telingu, or Gentoos Country to the north of **(15)** Madras They come here to carry palankeens as the Irish or Welsh come to harvest with us When they have made thirty or forty Pagodas they go back and with that capital become rich farmers. These are all men of cast that wou'd not eat our food; they are clean in their cooking & eat out of brass bowls as bright as gold – one of them is cook & eight only run with the Palankeen the Cook goes once a week to a neighbouring wood & there cuts down as many firesticks & boughs as will last him a week; he makes them up into two immense faggots; they are very light boughs – & running a stake through them he shoves one to one end & one to the other & puts the stake over his shoulder & looks like a walking wood. – [drawing of wood carrier] They eat no but little meat except we give them a rupee for a sheep Their food is chiefly plain rice the water of which or rice Gruel they drink. It is called Canchi – They season it with Tamarinds Capsicums & onions. – When they have liesure [sic] they fish, & are very expert at fishing. – They make their own nets, & are generally employed in netting. Indeed they are never idle unless you shou'd call their attention to their persons idleness but the Hindoos think no labour vain that improves beauty, or is for cleanliness – to them health. – They go into the tank in a morning to wash & there scrape their teeth for half an hour – If they wait for their masters at a door they take out a bit of looking glass and examine their faces taking out every superfluous hair **(16)** from their eyebrows & shaping them in the neatest manner – they eradicate also the hairs of the nostrils nostrils & any others that grow round their faces with the utmost exactness – such appearances wou'd be as disgusting to them, as it wou'd be to us to see our nails grown to claws – Their nails they also pare very neatly & are indeed very clean in every respect & cultivate a bit of our garden for their own use for Capsicums & sour greens.

We have a head gardener & three or four or five men under him who are all people of cast but very poor & low. they are malabars who are not so neat as the Gentoos – What they are employed about might puzzle you to discover. They bring nothing into the house to eat, but a few vegetables that require hardly any culture. Their work is watering the trees & cleaning the

walks of weeds. The heat prevents us from observing them & I believe they lye [sic] down all day; but we must have them to clean the places & they will not do more unless they are watched. When they work for a native master they are made to do a great deal – we pay these men 1 ½ pag^d each & two to the master, They steal & sell all the garden produces & without constant scolding & threatening we shou'd never have a thing we oranges limes we have sour Oranges, limes Mangoes & Guavaas [sic] in abundance but they think it hard to allow us any. – There is a large fruit as big as a peck measure called a Jack fruit which they sell for three or four fenems [sic] a piece – we had about two hundred on the trees last year & I never got but about eight or ten – between the butler & the gardeners they were all disposed of. –

The Pariahs eat all our food which is a great deal, for we can never keep it above a day; yet these wretches have as much wages as the others who cannot touch a bit.-

[Mary to Hetty, October 14, 1804]

I must tell you again about the things you sent us this time, for fear my former letter should miscarry well then, to give you the worst first, some of the jam pots went off: whether in their zeal for the good cause, they dreamed, as thy [sic] lay in the hold, that the ship was attacked; or fired a royal salute on General Biss's landing I know not but so it was the pots were broke & the jam spilt: but don't be fretting & greving [sic] after 'spilt milk' a great deal of it came safe & good, we have picked a few excellent strawberries raspberries & white plumbs & all the Pickles Catchup & Raspberry vinegar arrived without a crack,

[General Trent] he likes a good dinner & is so much an Indian that the dishes must be pretty highly seasoned if they are made ones, you see I am giving you a hint & to make it complete I will tell you that his favourite meat is grass lamb.

[Elizabeth to Hetty: October 16, 1804]

I have left out Mrs: Chambers's letters which if you will read you see what to do about the preserves – I only wish the bottled things all those – I want – & Rasberries [sic] & Strawberries & Pickles The latter are essential. – you have sent me more Cetchup [sic] than I shall use whilst it is good – your Walnuts are excellent. – Please to get others as young as you can for Mr: G. has no teeth & when he comes to a hard one he says "Hetty has forgot my teeth." We have not opened this years that is the last but must in a few days —

1805

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Sister, Esther "Hetty" Symonds James, August 24, 1805]

Mr: Nicholls spent what time he cou'd with us; he was always welcome for he was a great favourite of mine on board ship, & he is one of Richard's best beloved of all the sons of the green waves – I feel great obligations to him for the care he took of the seeds, which came in a lucky time & are now young Cabbage plants & if they are not all stolen out of it may become cabbages in my garden – Mr: Nicholls too made us a valuable present for which I hardly know

how to reward him He softened our hearts, with a cask of the nicest English beef that ever was bit by Indians teeth. Here is nothing but feasting upon it breakfast, tiffing, & supper. In this he added a cask of Pork & O, most admirable! a bag of split peas! – All superlative delicacies – I beg if you shou'd see Captain Millet that you tell him how much we are obliged to this good youth & that we will not forget his civility –.

Biss is extremely anoyed [sic] at their sending out red cabbage – “I wonder they cou'd think of such thing, says he – so finding this he is plagued all day Sir Henry reading the letters & protesting he finds such passages as these “poor dear Billy is so fond of Red Cabbage I hope it will be sent to him wherever he is.” – then Biss, “I don't care I won't a eat [sic] bit of it” –

I have already sent one piece to Mr: Heyne with a couple of flowers of those which came last & a silver sprig. He is very good natured & sends me baskets of little apples from Bangolore [sic], & lately a large Basket of Potatoes, which they are trying to cultivate in the Mysore, those from Bangalore are small but at Nunda Droog they are as large as the English I hope in time we shall get a supply – at present we have only such as the particular season come from **(0067/291)** [7] Bengal.

Sep^r. 3^d: Mr: Prosser called here yesterday middle day & brought all the things we had bought of him which was a great deal of Wine & a barrel of Vinegar &c –

I must now tell you about the eatables the sweetmeats or rather preserves of your's & Mrs: Whitleys are all come quite safe & well not the least accident & they are super excellent all. – The Pickles are all right but woe & alas there is no Pickled Cabbage – Biss has been laughed at so much & at last not a bit of Pickled cabbage for poor Billy. – The confectionary in the Tumblers is all come dry & good but several of the tumblers fell to pieces which is no great loss – the lozenges & almonds in papers are not safe they are many of them melted & the Candy is gone from the Orange chips – They will not come out safe in papers. — The three gammons of Bacon are quite firm & good & so is one ham, the middle of one is decayed by some accident but the sides are tolerable – Tongues will not keep that way & is a pity to send them. They are one of the best things we are furnished with from the shops. They are brought out in little casks **(0072)** and are sold one by one if you like so to buy them. A whole cask is rather too much to be eaten whilst they are good. -

Friday – Aug^t: 6th [Sept 6]: My bustle is thank God over, yesterday & the day before we had our two great companies we dressed one of the Hams as the gammons will keep best – It was cut neatly so we made it do for the next day this was very saving you may think to give the two governors the Lawyer's leavings – but it was the most delicate Ham that ever was eaten in India Those we buy are kept till they are so hard & are cured so hard that they have no flavour the reason for this is that when delicately cured they will decay if put together – the middle of one of them as I said was decayed – from damp or bruise **(0073/295)** [9] The Gammons of bacon are quite good. –

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds, no date; received in England February 28, 1806]

I have receivd [sic] a very kind present from Mrs: Biss whom I do not know, of two fine hams. I never eat any so good in India we had them [word crossed out] for our great dinners two of which came close together -. I drest [sic] the Hams first because I knew that the gammons will keep & they are arrived quite safe & I owe many thanks for them to Ned & Nancy, three of their gammons I have the others were mouse bitten & Hetty sent me something else in lieu of them.

—

I have had two very smart presents by these (0044/276) [11] ships the one was a Cap for Mary & another for me from Mr: Prosser, who brought all our things very safe – & a [sic] also three Dozen of Cyder from his uncle Mr: Powell -.

1806

[Mary to Hetty 28 January 1806]

We have continued to get through the greatest part of your excellent eatables they were all extremely fine except the tongues which you know you only sent as an experiment, I am housewifing the pickles to make them last out the year but they are in great request, the sweetmeats are nearly disposed of

they have led me astray from the subject I was upon, which is giving you some account of your good things & the manner in which we have disposed of them, the hams were all eaten up to the bone & were all excellent. The sweet meats both yours & Maam's [?] were far the best that have ever arrived; tomorrow is Sunday & I intend to treat my friends with some raspberry tarts, but as the stock is getting low I am rather stingy, however I am proud to [0091a] say that my minced pies have been prodigously admired this year real orthodox minced pies, I now & then send half a dozn to the Tents & am sure to be told they came very opportunely or were truly acceptable or some such answer as proves my labour is not thrown away. Monday. We had the party as I expected yesterday. & all vastly gay with the jam & some fine fat Ducks & two hadsome [sic] dishes of green peas, there we beat you I think on the second day of February. We take care to keep the English season too for as it was Candlemass day which Sir Henry calls the last day of Christmass, we had a large Norfolk Turkey & some mince pies.–I think I am writing you a pretty nonsensicall [sic] letter but it is necessary you should have a familiar peek at us now & then & I know no one else will spend ink & paper on such subjects. Our party consisted of our own family, only with the addition of Mr. Biss Mr. Walpole & a Mr. Dalgaines [?] of thier [sic] society- whose Tent is pitched about 4 miles to the Westward of us.

Do not trouble yourself to send many varieties of confectionary articles, as the Scotch Caraways, the Toloo Lozenges, the Candied Almonds & Orange chips were the only things much esteemed I am sorry to say the Almonds have hitherto been rather unfortunate for being packed in paper only, they have never been dry enough to bring to table. Store jars well corked & rezined [sic] are I think the best things to put them in.

[From Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther “Hetty” Symonds James, February 12, 1806]

Dull & downhearted I spent the day in sullenness – when lo! Just when I was going to Eat my roast fowle & Bengall potatoes – very watery [word crossed out] & not much bigger than [word crossed out] peach-stones

[Elizabeth? to Miss Thoburn, n.d.]

Plantains one can hardly one can hardly [sic] call trees but the sorts are innumerable some are very good They are like Pears when you eat them some sorts less juicy but warm to the stomach indeed they are perfect food which is an advantage of many of the Fruits here The Rajah Plantains is as fine a Fruit as ever I eat Oranges are dark Green outside are remarkably juice & sweet the peal [sic] has an aromatic [sic] flavour the Tamarind is a very beautiful Tree & very high —

1807

[Mary to Hetty March 4, 1807]

In my last, I had the pleasure of acknowledging all the Packages you had so carefully & nicely collected & packed for us. We have dressed 3 of the hams which are excellent & the confectionery is all come very dry & good, being packed in bottles. Betsy was delighted to see the Almonds which are the first we have received dry. & she & Sir Henry are pecking at them every day insomuch that there is a great appearance of a drying wind having found its way into the bottle. The only things which have suffered in carriage are some bottles of Capilaire, only two of which arrived whole but that is quite immaterial as we have very little use for it & the natives understand making beautiful clear syrop which answers the same purpose.

the soap you have sent is very acceptable pray add a bar or two of common, mottled soap to the next packages, & if you can without inconvenience send a dozn or so of bottled goosberries[sic] & currants they will be an extraordinary treat. The cranberries are come beautiful & most acceptable they are. I have only opened one pot of your preserves which was a strawberry pot & excellent, but I think stone pots are preferable to the white ones & the preserves which come in them are higher flavoured, & the risk of breaking is not so great. Your old walnuts, & a pot of brown mushrooms are all we have opened yet, both are as good as possible In future do not trouble yourself to send so many varieties of sugarplumbs [sic] for although they look very pretty & are very ornamental to the table yet as those which have fruit in them do not keep very well (such as the barberry sugar plums &c) & as the Coloured ones are not admired in flavour they are scarcely worth the trouble &c.

[Probably from Elizabeth Gwillim, to an unknown recipient, n.d.]

(1) When I came here I found the Country in the finest verdure possible & the trees in blow in which state they have remained ever since and it is now 6 months. this climate is lovely from Nov^r. to March the mornings are cold or else it is much like a pleasant summer in England & the corn feilds [sic] & Hedges look much alike but it is rice not wheat. I have in my own Garden plenty of Turnips very good carrots rather short but sweet french beans very good – & a

sort of bean eat shelled of the Country. The Country Green a very nice vegetable English Cabbage with poor hearts, but sweet green peas of a small sort but extremely [sic] good – Cucumbers, Endive quite white parsley, Mint, – besides which we have cellery [sic]; excellent spinach, mustard cress – small lettuces sage & almost every thing but broad beans Caulliflower [sic] & brocoli [sic] which will not do here yet for Gardening &c has not been attended to here till lately but I doubt not but everything wou'd grow except peas all the rest is to be had the whole year Potatoes grow in the North & we have many vegetables of the Country The Oranges are very fine the Limes in abundance. Melons Pine apples – are very good [word crossed out] Grapes do not come till april & May The Plantains are a nice fruit the Pears & the Guavas are a good pick some think they have the flavour of a strawberry & so they have but they have a forbidding smell on the outside like Onions (2) The Mango of the best kind is as large as a pint bason of the colour shape & texture of an Apricot but juicy & rich with a good deal of the fine apple flavour & almost too rich for me of the green ones they make tarts which very well supply the the [sic] worst of Apples – here are also various fruits of an acid not good for [words crossed out] eating but excellent for tarts amongst them the Callacca so like a Gooseberry that I am not sorry at all that you have done more for they are quite as good with the advantage of the fresh taste - Raspberries Strawberries and burberries are most esteemed here. English Pickles are very valuable we pay 3/6 per Bottle for vinegar [sic] English but I only give it company for I think the country vinegar [sic] just as good – which is made of Tody or Arrack a liquor drawn from the Cocoa Palm tree.

The fatted Beef is too rich for me the leaner sort is sweet but small & not tender. All sorts of Poultry are as fine as in the london markets & we have sea, & river fish in great profusion the sole, the mullet & the Skate and Eels are all like the english indeed the shell fish Oysters Crabs shrimps & prawns ar [sic] large as the tail of a lobster and very fine here are also some other kinds. Veal is very delicate but small Pork & roasting Pigs very good of the China sort breed China hams are good and they make good bacon in this place the mutten [sic] when fat is very nice but you must feed it yourself they have no wool but short hair they are very full of meat – very fine grained you may buy a wether [?] sort of sheep – alive for about three shillings the Kid is most delicate we have no woodcock but snipes wild ducks & teal most people every day in the winter season and some people most indeed catch the teal in winter and keep them all the year. Hares are very cheap and good but Partridges are but the name for they are as dry as a stick. They make the bread like French bakers & it is as white as snow Muffins &c and all sorts whatever can be made of milk & eggs Custards, Trifles &c and all sorts of Pattry [sic] is in perfection the butter is fresh every day and is very nice they take very little pains to beat it up as it comes crumbling in general but for Table and all people who make their own butter have it as fine as in England & indeed are very ostentatious in displaying it for they have for table butter made into a kind of model with leaves turning back like a pine Apple or Cabbage