

Lama Gfui
please return

Mrs. Elizabeth S. Cowles

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Hotel Cecil,
Delhi.

Dear All:

This is Delhi. Lots has happened since I wrote last. We had a quickie (3 hr.) flight here from Karachi on Thursday and now are established at the Cecil Hotel in old Delhi with shade trees about, fans blowing and every English pre-partition comfort. Things about Delhi that are like Karachi - it is just as full of smells and sounds and colors; and HOT! Things different - it is beautiful and well laid out, with handsome buildings and residences, avenues lined with trees (instead of new and raw and with air of having sprouted up out of the desert overnight). It is much crowder and more Mother-Indiaish. The hordes in the streets are beyond description, and a small mob follows one from car to shop and shop to car, pressing wares on one's attention or begging for alms. Being now in Hindu country, sacred cows abound, roaming around in great numbers through the streets - hard not to butt into one as one drives about! The heavy sense of teeming humanity never leaves one, everywhere you look (if you succeed in forgetting the mass for a moment and concentrating on the single face or group) there is something striking or poignant or beautiful or unbearable to see. I am not suffering about the horrors as much as I feared I might - perhaps you will think me callous. But the immensity of it all is so incredible. Also I may still be a bit punch-drunk from the newness of everything. And then too, amazingly, the young, the strong, the hopeful element is here too - one sees it constantly in the bearing of the young men, the Indian officials, the soldiers and policemen. The groups of girls whose faces, full of beauty and intelligence, stand out in a crowd. This is (of course) what is keeping the country going - this new India. One can only hope will be enough as against the huge, the inert masses.

Dears: I have the whole attention and command the entire services of one man, dark brown and name of Harry. He is called a bearer. Funny business this not lifting a finger. There are armies of other servants at our disposal - clothes are washed or pressed (in split seconds if you desire it) by a DOBI, things mended by a DARZI. Oscar tells me that on the trail water is brought by a BISTI, food by a MONGI. Everyone has his little private job, except for the head bearer who is supposed to oversee everything. He usually wears a spotless white suit and turban or fez. At the American Embassy here (where we had lunch Friday) we were waited on by the stylistest costumes you ever saw, sashes of red, white and blue, and red turbans with bands of the same stripes and American Eagles in gold (could have been designed by Lily Dache. Though not as intimately linked with the Embassy here as in Karachi, they are helping us enormously and our food and gear, sent in their care, is piled high off in a side room on the premises. Ambassador Henderson has been very cordial - had the Indian Ambassador to Nepal at lunch to meet us. His Excellency is going in to Katmandu a day or two ahead of us, all the way by plane (which is how we are hoping to come out. For the trip on we want to go the traditional way, over the 2 passes and on our own hoofs). Also on Friday we were received by the Nepalese Ambassador to India, a delightful little man who told us Katmandu was very different from New York City and hoped we should not be "bored"! Except for these gentlemen and the officials one deals with in travel arrangements we have not seen any Indians and shall not, I imagine. Too bad. Seeing and being able to talk freely with the Pakistanis was one of the great features of our stay with the Warrens in Karachi. But, my Pets, I wish to say here and now that I do not (and shall not) feel that a brief stay in these countries will fit me to speak as a political expert. Am terribly interested and shall continue to have my ears pinned back about everything BUT am not going to fool myself or you into supposing I know anything whatever about the incredible complexities of the political situation here.

I cannot imagine how I have been able to write all this time ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour) and not mention as yet the great news that we went to Agra yesterday and the day before and I have seen the Taj Mahal! Yes, by moonlight and by early morning too, with the soft shadows making the marble shimmer like an opal. We visited it first at night, everything so hushed and quiet, our only light (the moon just coming up) the lanterns of the guides. All you knew was that you had never imagined anything so lovely and that no great sight you had ever seen before prepared you for its color, its outline and the beauty of the setting. It took the light of the next day to show the perfection and delicacy of the detail, the wonderful color relation of the greenery, flowers and trees to the marble structure itself and contribution made by the side buildings with their minarets and towers, all in exquisite balance, to the perfection of the whole. The Mosque on one side and rest house on the other are red sandstone with creamy domes. And behind them and the Taj is the green-grey Jumna river, wide and smooth as a lake. O, dears, must stop trying to describe the indescribable and heart sinks to tell you that I mixed up my kodachrome film and brought exposed rolls instead of new, so could only take 2 color shots. (Ugh). Blasted away with the Rollerflex to beat all, though. And must tell you: 3/4 up the inside of one of the tall Taj minarets (in pitch dark) Oscar and I were assailed by one million Bats. Most dreadful experience of my life!

After the Taj we went through the Agra fort, seeing the Jasmine tower where the Emperor Shah Jahan (who built the Taj) spent the last 7 years of his life in captivity looking down the river to the building he had created to the memory of his favorite wife. The huge fort, all red sandstone, with moat and drawbridge and scalloped pierced rampart was astonishing. I was surprised to find the Moguls were cloister-conscious and there are beautiful enclosed courts with scalloped arches. Then brass turrets and marble pools, carved marble screens and inlaid work (carnelian, jade and turquoise set into the stone) of unbelievable beauty and delicacy. What made me see stars most was the bathing establishment of the ladies of the harem, a succession of rooms of all-over carved marble inlaid in tiny convex mirrors. If you waved an arm it was multiplied in each of them! There were pools and fountains and channels in the polished floor for cascades of rose water. And there were hollow panels in the wall against which (in varying pitch) the dance rhythm was beaten out by hand. Can't you imagine how those mirror walls would shimmer and gleam with one billion dancing girls reflected in them? Makes me swoon to think of. Other items of our Agra program worth mentioning - a snake charmer piping to a python (twined round his neck) and bevy of cobras (in his lap) and a magician who amused and mystified us with his sleight of hand at the hotel after dinner. No Indian rope trick however!

Now a word about our plans and I will close this. We leave day after tomorrow (Oct. 4) for Katmandu - (1) plane to Lucknow (2) overnight train to Raxaul (last stop in India) (3) a night at R. before starting off on the Nepal side of the border. Beginning the 5th we shall be on the historic route to Katmandu. The night of the 5th will be spent at the Sisagari pass rest house (see Jan. National Geographic) and we should have crossed Chundragini pass and be in the valley of Nepal on the afternoon of Oct. 6. Be thinking of us! The moment when we see Everest from the top of the pass should be one of the great gifts of life. Shall be seeing it all with eyes for all of you and feeling to match. Many letters here in Delhi and they meant so much. Thank you, thank you. With love to all

Betsy

Cannot remember if I said in my last letter that Oscar and Nell Houston are a complete joy to be with. And nearly forgot (heavens!) to add the biggest and best news of all: which is that Charley Houston is going on the Kosi River trip with us taking Walter Wood's place. He will fly to meet us here on our return from Katmandu the last part of October. We are still hoping (and expecting) Andy Bekewell also to be a member of the party. Signing off for now, Dears!

Your most affectionate Betsy