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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

from Lyon
On the Irrawaddy near Mandalay
7.2.23.

My dear David,

I dare say you will be interested in hearing something of our wanderings, and indeed I have a delightful letter of yours by me in which you suggest as much.

We left Calcutta for Burma on Jan 21st and we are now working our way back to Rangoon, via Pagan, the ancient capital of the country, and Prome, and we sail for Singapore on the 15th inst. The wife started rather badly, as she was sick at Agra and again just after our arrival in Calcutta. But I am glad to say she soon recovered, with careful treatment and a long rest at

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Katunpore, in Calcutta, and, on a good day, the spoken, is in excellent form just now. I have naturally got in more travelling than she could manage and have put in visits to Delhi (while she stayed on in Agra) and to Darjiling, Dacca, Bankura & Shillong, while she could not venture upon - But we both enjoyed our visit to India very much and nothing could have exceeded the kindness and cordiality of the welcome we received, especially from our Indian friends - I was greatly touched by the constant evidence I received that I was actually held in kindly remembrance by so

many whom I had known & with whom I had worked, the men so that the demonstrations were actuated by no thought of favour to come my position being that of an unofficial visitor, a position I was most careful to maintain.

I saw both Reading and Lytton and was confirmed in my previous impression of the former as an exceedingly able and far-seeing man who is probably the best Viceroy we could have at the helm in these most difficult times. He appears to have maintained the prestige with which he came out, and he certainly has the confidence of many Indian politicians who are inclined to regard the Secy of State and the Government at home with deep suspicion. Lytton made a very different impression on me - I don't think he carries enough weight for his position and he was crude in his remarks on the situation & the policy he suggested, while evidently propounding them with considerable self-satisfaction. And Lady Lytton is too trivial and self-centred to be of any practical help to him.

As to the present state of affairs, there is a lull in the political excitement which was worked up last year and signs of reaction are not wanting, of which the Viceroy and the Moderates have not been slow to take advantage. And the improvement has been favoured by the complete failure of Gandhi's policy & promises and the futility of the proceedings of the recent meeting of the National Congress, when C. R. Das as President made a rambling and ineffective speech, full of amateurish political philosophy, & the extreme party carried against him resolutions proclaiming adherence ~~of~~ to the policy prescribed by Gandhi in which there are no germs of life. But we obviously must not presume too much on this improvement. Men like Sinha, Ali Imam, Jagadish An. Bose and others warned me of the depth and great ^{spread} ~~extension~~ of

racial feeling which evidently alarmed them considerably, and I have little doubt that trouble is in store for us in the future as soon as the anti-British element finds a new cry and better leaders. In these circumstances the longer we can keep things quiet and play for time the more chance we shall give to the recent changes to win through. I believe we should press steadily on with them, avoiding political demonstrations & 'pronouncements' so far as possible & doing our best to restore the loss of faith in the stability of our policy & promises which has done us so much harm of late years. Above all we must retrench, especially at the top of the Government scale. The reforms are proving too expensive for the country which resents keenly the burden of additional members of Council & Ministers & their establishments who have notoriously little to do, and this is more than half the reason for their unpopularity. Potentially, a tyrannical Dictatorship that counts, at any rate, has lost its delight in pomp and show, and its reverence for the power that displays such attributes, and would welcome enthusiastically a return to simplicity and economy in high quarters. So one of the most pressing duties we have on hand is the cutting down of the cost of our administration. As for the general feeling of the masses, we had of course but very little opportunity of gauging it. With one exception, when a young student at Agor turned and spat at the car in which the wife and Mrs. Davies were going through the town, we have had no experience of rudeness or discourtesy, and I could not detect any change in the bearing of the people towards us.

from that which we experienced while we were out here a few years back. On one point, I may mention, everyone appeared to be agreed, and that was the fatality of the move to Delhi and the scandalous extravagance which is involved, not only in the building of the new city but in the standard of expenditure it will set to all India, ~~and~~ ^{while} the Imperial spirit of domination implied in the whole scheme is a constant source of irritation to the patriotic Indian. The new Delhi is an anachronism before it has been completed.

We were quite sure to see the last of Calcutta & to drop down the Hughli, past your old home in the Gardens, for the last time. The Victoria Memorial, by the way, is a magnificent building, the finest monument erected in modern times, I should think. The purity of the marble in which it is encased & the fine sweep of its classical lines are most striking and its general effect will be greatly enhanced when the grounds have been planted out & the trees round it have attained fair proportions. From the time we left Calcutta everything has been new to us as we have never before come further East than Chittagong. Rangoon was unpleasantly hot & the hotel was dirty & uncomfortable, but the Lakes and the Shwe Dagon are beautiful and the city is growing apace & giving much evidence of prosperity. Unfortunately the politicians recently induced the Trustees of the Shwe Dagon & of many up country pagodas to insist upon everyone taking off shoes & stockings before they entered the precincts. There is no religious basis for such an order and it has been

engineered for political purposes only, which makes it doubly annoying. Some American tourists submit but the large majority of visitors stay away. Apart from the indignity involved, the risk of tetanus is not small. It may be hoped that the appreciable loss of income will lead eventually to the reversal of the order.

The effect of the gold shuttle which covers the Shwe Dagon (which is over 300 feet high) is wonderful. It catches every ray of the sun & I caught the first glimpse of it far down the river, long before we had any other sign that we were approaching Rangoon.

But the chief delight of this country is the gaiety of the people, their brilliant silks, the freedom of the women & children and the atmosphere of prosperity that ^{surrounds} them and their villages. Mandalay is picturesque, with its wooden palaces ^{with} carved ^{carved} & ~~carved~~ ^{carved} hills decorated with glass set in gold & silver, but the Bazaar, with its Silk Street & Umbrella Street, the shop women & the purchasers, was really more attractive. And the journey up to Bhamo, through one fine defile at least, above which one cliff rises almost straight to a height of 800 feet, the streamer stations, the pagodas dotted on the banks & the hills, are all interesting. Bhamo is only 50 miles from the Chinese boundary & is full of Chinese, jade merchants, traders & coolies - so the bazaar & towns presented quite

a new aspect to us - However, we must reserve
unde talk about our new experiences until our
return - We shall hope to see you in September,
before we finally settle down in Oxford again.

We hope you and Lady Praeger keep well and that
your new work is not too strenuous. I wish indeed that
we had been in that extremely valuable Department to-
gether. I dare say you know that they offered me a
permanent post in it, as an Under Secretary on £800 a
year. But I could not start official life again at my
age, so I preferred to work on as a temporary hand on
an allowance & soon after received the offer from Oriel.

I am so glad you have met my sisters and greatly
appreciate your goodness to them. They have done work
in the world which was most doing and have many
grateful friends amongst their old pupils. And it is
a great pleasure to them to make such friends as
yourselves in their retirement.

You will be worried of all this. Love from both
of us goes to you both with it, and I am
always

Your sincere friend

Percy C. Lyon

Sir David Praeger