

c/o Dr. James Cousins
Trivandrum
Travancore
S. India

[ca. 1938]

Dear Nannie.

On Nov. 10th I landed in Colombo and found your fat letter of Oct 13 waiting me. It was comforting to know that you had heard from me even tho I had not heard from you in such a long time.

Having two good friends in Colombo, the American Consul and the German Consul I was hospitably entertained and taken on some beautiful drives thru the country. Tho these conventional people must have considered me somewhat peculiar in that I chose to stay at a little native inn in the Pettah amongs the Tamils, Moors and Indians. It was all such a glutinous feast for the eyes; the great variety of types the color, the jewels of Ceylon, the tropical vegetation that I was in a state of intoxication the whole while. I saw an interesting performance of native dances done by a "bevy of society girls", and the much more thrilling dances of the black men of Kandy in their elaborate costumes of gold and silver metal. Unable to settle down to any work after a week, a lunch told me it was the moment to leave and so by chance I arrived in Madaya on the night of the great Kriethigai festival in the Minakshi Temple. The galleries and courts were so packed with thousands of people milling about all talking at the tops of their voices that I slipped part way into the inner sanctuary before being noticed. The Hindus are very strict about keeping infidels out of their temples, and as you know, it is only this year ^{in Travancore} that outcasts have been ad-

mitted, ~~to the temples~~. This is considered the greatest religious revolution that has occurred in India for many a century and I do believe that Jim Cousins' influence has had something to do with this reform. He is "cultural advisor" to the Maharani (the mother of the Maharajah - and as Travancore is a matriarchal state - the real ruler) as well as being Dean of the College of Fine Arts of the rapidly growing University here.

To go back to Madura - Not being an out-caste I was allowed to contemplate the beauty of the spectacle, the Golden Lily Tank with rows of thousands lamps on its terraced steps, and floating on its Gopuram-reflecting surface being especially magnificent.

And so on the next day to Trivandrum - a town which is more like a suburb: collages bungalows, palaces scattered about amid groves of palms on rolling gentle hills. J.C. is busy mostly with the Museum at the moment, and running about the Maharani. I haven't met the Royal family yet except to see them riding of driving. The Maharaja's grandmother was out in her coach the other day on the main boulevard. The coachmen and footmen were done up in livery but she didn't have a stitch on above the waist! I envied her - as this is a too-hot country even at this season.

On my fourth day I started out on an expedition with Gopinath, the Court dancer and his troupe fourteen members is all - to a place called Vaikam about 150 miles up the Malabar coast. We were gone five days - returning late last night; the whole adventure was so unusual and there such strangely beautiful country that I feel I should make some effort to write it up. I took a great many photos which could be used with a magazine article. Actually we travelled on an inland sea, an immense lagoon which in certain sections is at a lower level than the sea, with many islands which become marshes and marshes which become canals and canal which become large bodies of water. The whole scene is composed of sweeping curved lines: the tall coconut palms, the long elegant boats with pointed prows, the inverted crescent line of the thatched-roofed cottages, even the long horns of the cows and buffaloes which pretrude from the water's surface as they ^{beasts} swim about. Our objective was, again, a religious festival at which Gopinath & Co. danced, but this time I was not allowed in any part of the temple even tho I should take off my shoes and deny Christian faith. Moreover even

being "nephew" of the great Dr. Cousins did not help. He has gone thru some sort of purification ceremony and is the only European allowed inside any or all 4 over part of, Hindu temples.

There is an Oriented Conference here Dec 20-24 till which time I may stay as Greta Cousins, now in Madanapalle, will be here then. I don't find the types especially enticing to draw and am in a way impatient to get farther north.

If you happen to see a children's book by me somewhere please let me know. Not a solitary word from the publishers - except one cable in Colombo: "Marvelous!" Where all my mail has gone is a mystery. The second set of photos of your house also failed to arrive. Next time try bringing them in your own plane! Thanks so much for looking after my insurance. I did send the check from Japan but the servant who took the letter to the P.O. forgot to register it. And let me know all the details of your Mexican trip especially about the family tribe and about Taxco.

I sent you a little grass hand bag from Colombo. Hope it can be used.

Jim Cousins hasn't changed a bit in 10 years his vegetable diet apparently agrees - it's a bit too ethereal for me. Ted.