

Charles Kingsley was born on 22 September 1743, the son of Charles Kingsley, who was elected a Warden of the Grocer's Company in 1757 and Elizabeth Ludd. He sailed from Portsmouth on 24 March 1769 in the Prince of Wales and he was appointed an Ensign on 2 July 1770 (his name is incorrectly spelt Kingly in reference [1]), working as a Practitioner Engineer in the East India Company at Fort William under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, the Chief Engineer. His salary was 107 Rupees per month (about £12), and the position appears to have been found for him by his father's first cousin Anselm Beaumont, a former Resident at Midnapore in 1763-4. Beaumont wrote to Richard Barwell in Calcutta on 18 February 1769 "By this conveyance [the Prince of Wales] goes out Mr Chas Kingsley who I mentioned to you in My last I have given him a Letter to you & have Ordered him always to consult you therefore I must request that you will afford him your good Advice on all Occasions, & as he will want Linnen &c on his first Arrival you will please Advance him five hundred Rupees on My Account which with what he has with him will be full sufficient for everything that is necessary & tho' I have not the Least suspicion of his taking an Extravagant turn yet that Air sometimes produces strange Alterations in disposition & you should observe any propensity in him that Way I beg that you will check it & tell him what I have wrote to you on that Subject for although I have his interest & welfare very much at heart I am neither Willing nor can afford to support any Extravagance". It appears that, as a child, Kingsley knew Barwell, who was almost two years his senior since he wrote to his mother "I received your letter by Mr Barwell, he dined with me some time ago, & breakfasted with me a few mornings since, he is so much grown, it was some time before I rightly knew him." The letter book includes copies of letters written between December 1771 and July 1772 to his father Charles, his mother Elizabeth, his brother Thomas, his aunt Ann Kingsley, Anselm Beaumont and a family friend Mrs Ewer.

He was seriously ill in India and he wrote to Mr Beaumont in January 1771 "the first five months I was in Bengal, I was confined to my room" However he wrote to his aunt in June 1772 "I have had no reason to complain much of my health for some time past; not having had any severe illness for upwards of a year past, I struggle on, sometimes well, at others complaining, by this means I stand a much better chance than those who enjoy a strong constitution and an uninterrupted state of health, a violent fever generally proves fatal to such, while the wealthy ones bend to the disorder." He wrote to his brother in December 1771 "we do not expect any rain except a small shower now & then for these six months to come, indeed for the four months the rain continuous, the ground is never dry & people dye away like rotten sheep, after which the cold weather sets in again, & the sudden change of weather knocks up the Invalids – but accidents of this kind being so very common are little thought of in this Country, people are carried with very little ceremony to the Rev. Mr Yates's Workhouse & little more is said about them. I have attended many a worthy fellow thither, but however have had the luck to come back myself." Before the letters start, he lost an eye in an accident, and he wrote to his brother in July 1772 "You ask me how I came to be shot, it was a trifle, a Gentleman separated from me by a thick hedge fired, & two of the shots lodged in my head, and several others hit very hard."

In Calcutta he was lodging with Colonel Campbell¹. He wrote to his father in December 1771 "Sometime ago I entered into a Mess, which I have now laid aside, as Col Campbell stays in Bengal, I need not be at much expense, except during my Cousin's stay, as I cannot introduce him to the Col, yet I have many friends who I dare say will make him as welcome as myself ... the climate of Bengal is very fine from the beginning of November to the latter end of February; I am now writing at 11 o'clock with a very warm cloth waistcoat on, & a handkerchief round my neck; it is true we have not the convenience of a fire in this Country." However at the end of the letter he added "Col Campbell has taken a house in the Country, so that he keeps no constant table in the Fort, the Gentlemen who used generally to eat there now only go by particular invitation, a circumstance you may imagine not very agreeable to me, however I am at but very little more expense than before, having dined at home only once for this fortnight past". He wrote to Beaumont in January 1771 "I have very little leisure to attend the breakfasts in Calcutta, as I am every morning employed on the works till after 8 o'clock."

In April 1772 he wrote to his father that he had "obtained from Col C permission to draw an allowance for house rent, which is 60 Rupees, in consequence of which I have quitted my apartments in the Fort, and with Mr Pinman have hired a small house, not far from the new Burying Ground, with upwards of an Acre of

Garden around, and a fish pond belonging to it. As I live about two miles from the Fort, and am obliged to go in once or twice every day, besides my Palanquin (which I cannot do without in the hot weather & rains) I have bought a little horse for 100 Rupees, and after having paid for his keeping, the rent of the house & some other little expenses attending it, have about 30 Rupees a month over, which to me is no inconsiderable thing, as I can now live up on my income, which I assure I could not after Col C had given up his free table. I shall be able to live much cheaper here than in the Fort; I intend raising my own Poultry feeding Sheep &c – the Garden will supply us with Greens &c, & we have a fish pond which by the time the rains set in, will be tolerably stocked, besides being more out of the way of company. Mr Pinman and I have taken the house for a year, & Col C has allowed me workmen & materials for any repairs that are wanting, & I am now very busy in securing myself before the rains come on, which will be in the month of June, on this account I am but seldom in the Fort, but when they are finished, I shall ride in every morning at Sunrise, & if not engaged in the Fort or Calcutta to dinner, shall come home about 9 or 10 o'clock, between 4 & 5 in the afternoon, I shall go in again in my Palanquin, & come home in the evening in that or on horseback as may suit me, my vacant time I can fill up in my Garden, reading, writing &c. I am much cooler here than in the Fort, and I hope it will prove more healthy, as a Gentleman of my acquaintance recovered his health during the last rains by coming to live within 200 yards of where I now do. This is but a temporary favour, as I am liable to be ordered into the Fort again ... The house contains a hall & two rooms, and we propose adding two more with such out-houses and conveniences as may be wanting, which will cost me nothing."

He complained to his father in December 1771 that he was not getting the preferment that he expected "By all my letters you will find Col Campbell has done nothing for me yet, tho' we are on the same friendly terms as ever The Governour² & Council have requested Col Campbell to stay some time longer in the Country, which he has consented to; by this step of his my hopes of Promotion are vanished. A short time ago, he promised to do something for me before he went home, but as he has now agreed to stay at least another year, I may wait long enough for it. I have been very near getting an additional Post which would have brought me in about £100 a year more, and tho' as good as promised to me, is reserved for a Cousin of Col Campbell's who is coming in the Colebrooke, while I am put off with the hopes of an Adjutant being appointed to our Corps which I am to have, tho' at the same time I must inform you that the Governour has repeatedly refused to appoint one. Is not this sufficient to disgust one from the service, I have done duty here near two years, have ruined my constitution in the service, & when I was upon the point of getting something which would have enabled me to live comfortably, I am disappointed of it by one who has not yet seen Bengal, & what is still more grating I cannot live without laying myself under obligations to the Gentleman, who (as well as many others) I think has used me hardly. General professions of friendship & esteem, I shall always for the future think are of little³ or no consequence – Major Lillyman³ has often declared it was a shame nothing was done for me." He wrote to Beaumont the following month "There have no extra services, or orders to go up the Country happened so I have been here, and I assure you the labouring oar in the Fort is very much on me, there being so many young Gentlemen appointed Assistants merely to oblige friends, and capacity is not enquired after. I have lately been twice for a short time Chief Engineer, and I now do the duty of a Deputy Sub Director, without the least emolument arising from it, but something I think must happen soon."

In June 1772 he was appointed to command the Fort at Baj Baj on the Hoogli River about 12 miles downstream from Fort William.. He wrote to his father "The comfortable way of living, I spoke of in the former part of my letter, is already at an end, as I am in orders to proceed the 20 [June] to take the command of the Fort at Budge Budge by which means I lose my allowance for house rent but get full Battel⁴, had this command been given me a year ago I might have made something of it, but the Forts are now finished so that my Post has much more honour than profit in it – The Garrison consists of 3 Officers, one of Sepoys, a Gentleman to assist me and myself, there are 50 Invalids, 100 Sepoys and 100 Artillery Lascars besides the workmen belonging to the Forts. I am far from being displeased of my removal, any place is better than Calcutta where I wish never to be fixed again as the Country round the Fort is now pretty well cleared. I hope it will be tolerably healthy during the rains, which we daily expect to set in.

5th July The 10th I came down here and the 22nd relieved the Officer who commanded the Fort – Mr Ingles whom I have mentioned to you, is the Sepoy Officer on duty, & my long acquaintance with him renders it more agreeable than if a greater stranger had been here – I am very situated for all the necessaries, & conveniences of life, but nothing more, if I had a small sum of money by me I could lay it out to advantage, I am pretty clear I could treble any sum under a thousand pounds in the space of 16 months. I am at considerably

greater expense here than when I quitted Calcutta, but there are little things that make up the difference and I live much better. The Northern breeze you will find has been somewhat more favourable, but it was almost a case of necessity which gave me this command, that I might not stand in the way of others – this I must content myself with for the present, and I shall apply to be fixed here until I can get a command up the Country, as I do not wish to be fixed at Calcutta again.

Aug 12th Thank God I enjoy a pretty good state of health this disagreeable weather, one Month of the four is passed – I had a feverish complaint for a few days, occasioned I believe by the long continuance of an S wind but my old friend the Bark has removed it and I assure you I have performed some considerable cures of the men under my command since I have been down here. Tis a shame there is no Surgeon here, if a poor fellow is taken ill he must be sent to Calcutta, & it frequently happens that it is a considerable time before I can get a conveyance, as I have occasion for the Company boats under my command – One third of the Invalids have gone away sick since I came here, and I have four now under my care. I intend soon to get into a little way of trade, in buying wood here and sending it up to Calcutta where I can get 30 or 40 per cent & quick returns, but I cannot employ above 100 Rupees at a time in this way, & if for the present I can clear that sum monthly it is better than being idle – I manage this by a Banian⁶ as I do not appear in it myself.

Aug 18th My situation is very disagreeable here as at present the Country for many miles around is under water, & will be so for at least a month – the air is hot moist & putrid.

Sep 5 we are very sickly here at present; I have sent 19 men to Calcutta within these 4 days past, most of them with those fatal disorders of the Country, fluxes and intermitting fevers, but by the beginning of next month, our unhealthy season will be pretty well over; I ascribe my keeping well entirely to the use of the Bark & smoking Tobacco.”

In a letter to his aunt in July 1772 he wrote “[it] is very disagreeable here at present, the rainy season having set in the 11th [June] since which time it has rained almost incessantly; we have four months of this weather to come, which is called the sickly season . . . I am now fixed at Budge Budge as Commanding Officer, Doctor and Parson – I administer Medicines, but neither bleed or amputate, I baptise & bury, but do not read prayers, unless I can get an allowance for it – I have been pretty lucky in the Physical way.” He wrote to his mother “I am very pleasantly situated in this place, have a good house to live in (of which I am Master) & a garden, two fishponds supplied with very fine fish, some of them 5 or 6 feet long – I have also a good breed of Geese, Ducks, Rabbits, Fowls and Pidgeons, I keep Sheep, Goats & Kids with a Cow & Calf – my unnecessarys are a Monkey, Mongoose, Civet Cats and a young Crocodile – Excepting the Climate you I dare say could spend sometime very agreeably here. This place begins to be very sickly, tho’ thank God I hold it out pretty well, using a good state of exercise in riding & walking; I also take an infusion of Bark & Brandy twice a day, which I have reason to think has been serviceable in keeping off fevers, as I often feel very queer. I have buried two since I came down here and fear I shall have more of that duty before the rains are over – I was going to baptize a child a few days ago, but it died – I assure you I put on a very grave face on these occasions.”

He mentioned some entertainments. He wrote to his aunt on 13 December 1771 “Our Season of diversion is now come in; we have had two Plays, and tonight I am going to see Macbeth, with the Mayor of Garret⁷,” and to Mrs Ewer⁸ on 3 March 1772 “You are so kind as to send me an account of the diversions in England; we imitate you in set up a Cotterie⁹, but it is generally disliked, our other amusements are Balls, Concerts & Plays, but as the hot Season is now approaching, they will so be at an end.

A new Governour¹⁰ has lately arrived here, but as he is a single man, [I] imagine the diversions will not be so much as they have been.” He wrote to his father: “I had the satisfaction of meeting my Cousin¹¹ in good health & spirits, & Mr Pascal¹² the chief mate prevailed on me to stay a few days on board. I arrived here with him the 7th [February] The number of visitors with the Ship’s business prevented my having much conversation with Mr Fenner, but I expect him up in a few days, and he will remain in my quarters during his stay in Calcutta. He is unlucky with respect to his private trade as I could have ensured him 75 if not 100 per cent had he brought out some articles, for which there is now a great demand, tho’ he lost by them last voyage”. He also entertained a friend of his brother at Baj Baj: “Mr Mordaunt who was recommended by my brother Tom has accidentally called here on his way up, 4 hungry lads came ashore just as I was at dinner to enquire how far they were from Calcutta, I filled their bellies and dispatched them, but Mr Mordaunt not being very well I detained him ‘till yesterday afternoon, and sent him up in one of my own boats; I gave him what advice and

instruction the briefness of his stay would permit, but desired if he could make it convenient that he would come and spend a day or two with me, before he goes up the Country.”

He included occasional items of news. He wrote to his brother in December 1771 “I know of none of the name of Pearson¹³, but a Lieutenant T of Art: who died about a month ago, I imagine he was your friend, but he is really much better out of the world than in it, as he never would have made any figure in his profession, for which he did not appear in the least cultivated. I suppose you know a Mr Chatfield in the IH¹⁴, a brother of his was a Lt in the service was shot through the body in a duel about a week ago & died a few hours after it – I was very well acquainted with him, and he deserved a better fate. If you know Mr Chatfield, I think he ought to be acquainted with it, but it should be done in a very delicate manner.” He wrote to his father in January 1772 “The 26th we heard the Colebrooke was about two degrees to the Eastward of the entrance of the River, in great distress, most of her people being ill with the Scurvy; I immediately dispatched a few lines to Mr Fenner and shall set out tomorrow with the Vessel which is going down to carry refreshments on board & bring up the Recruits. 16th Feb. I was three days going down to Cujaree (about 120 miles) where the Colebrooke lay, & the Schooner in which I went down was unluckily ran upon a Sand Bank over it, but as the tide was coming in, and it did not blow hard, we fortunately got off without receiving any damage”.

He wrote to his mother in March 1772: “I have but little news to inform you of, except that the King¹⁵ left Allahabad where he resided by our protection some time ago. & has thrown himself into the hands of the Marathas, who have engaged to set him upon the throne of Delhi, this may perhaps make a diversion, as the territories we possess are held by a Grant from him. The French have 6000 fine Troops on the Islands of Bourbon¹⁶, it is not known what they design doing with them, they cannot support them there long neither can their settlements of Pondichirry & Mahé contain half of them; it is imagined they meditate a blow against some [of] our settlements on the Continent, a short time must discover their intentions. He wrote to his father on May 30 “Mr Hastings took the Chair last month, he is a very active spirited Governor, and appears to have the interest of the Company very much at heart; he sets off in a few days up the Country, to take a tour, & look into the administration of affairs in those parts. Mahommad Risoof Khan (acting) Nabob of Bengal was about a fortnight ago brought down from Muxadabad¹⁷ to Calcutta, where he is now a prisoner. The principal crime he is charged with is his being accessory to the late Jardine, it is reported he brought up the rice at 30 Seer¹⁸ for a Rupee, and sold it out again for 3, but time will shew whether these reports are true or not. It used to be customary before a Governour quitted the Chair to make a promotion in the Army, and the new Governour did the same. Mr Cartier entirely neglected the former and Mr Hastings has done nothing yet. 2 Aug [the Duke of Albany¹⁹] was unfortunately lost [on the Baraboulla sand] coming into the River, the Ship & Cargo are entirely gone, and only one life is lost. This unfortunate accident was owing to a mistake of the Pilot’s and a Dutch EI man was lost, with great part of her Crew, about the same place a few days before – The Duke of Albany’s Pacquet was luckily saved”. He wrote to his brother “it must be a severe stroke upon the Officers, and the whole settlement wildful of it, as it will considerably increase the prices of necessaries, already at an exorbitant Rate.”

Indeed the cost of items imported from Europe could be very expensive and he included the following list in a letter to his father in January 1771. “Tho’ I had no intentions of sending you my complain, yet the very exorbitant price of those European commodities I cannot do without induces me to beg the favour you would send me the undermentioned articles annually for my own consumption, & I will remit the money on receipt of them, as it does not suit me to send it now, or if you do not choose to send them at your own risque, & can get the Mate of any of the Ships to take them on his account, I will on receipt of them pay him 50 per cent on the Prime Cost.

4 ½ yards of Scarlet Cloth	4 – 10 –
3 yards white D ^o	2 – 11 –
2 d ^o black velvet	2 – 14 –
2 pairs of Epaulettes (casket lace)	2 – 2 –
5 doz: large Plain double Gilt Buttons	
5 doz: small D ^o	
a Hat with Gold button loop & band (genteel)	1 – 4 –
a plain D ^o of about 12/-	12 –

6 pairs of white Silk Stockings at 12/-	3 – 12 –
4 pairs of Shoes & 2 of Pumps @ 6/-	1 – 16 --
a pair of Boots	1 – 5 –
3 or 4 Cockades (pretty large)	5 –
a piece of Stair Ribbon	10 –
2 sets of gilt Buckles @ 10/-	1 – –
a little red black & white Sewing Silk with a few shirt buttons	

For these articles I am obliged to pay upwards of 150 per cent, and the difference in goodness makes it above 200.

Charles was made a Lieutenant on 13 September 1773 and he resigned on 19 September 1775. Anselm Beaumont wrote to Richard Barwell on 19 April 1775 “I have had Letters from my Cousin Kingsley who I find has been a long time in so bad a State of Health as to Oblige his Asking Permission to take a voyage to Bombay for the recovery of his health if he should be returned to Bengal I should be greatly obliged to you if it is Necessary for the Reestablishment of it that you would get him an Appointment to the N Ward as Bougy Bougy where he has been a considerable time is no good Situation for him to recover of his disorder.” In fact Charles arrived back in England on 4 November 1776 on the Talbot having sailed from Bombay. Beaumont died on 8 February 1776 and Charles inherited the residue of his estate which included assets worth over £20,000 in India. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of John Westneys and Elizabeth Clarke, at St Anne’s Church, Soho, on 24 November 1778, and he died at Canterbury at the end of November 1786, only a year after his father, leaving two children, Charles and Lucretia Anne.

[1] Major V. C. P. Hodson, *List of Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834*.

Footnotes:

¹ Archibald Campbell (1739-1791) served in India from 1762. He was appointed Chief Engineer for Bengal on 5 February 1768 and was soon promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. In 1773 he was forced to resign on the grounds of his rapidly declining health. After service elsewhere he reached the rank of Major-General, was knighted and returned to India as Governor of Madras 1786-1789.

² John Cartier (1733-1802) was Governor of Bengal 1769-1772.

³ Lieutenant-Colonel James Lillyman, Chief Engineer in the Company’s Service in Bengal, died in Calcutta on 23rd December 1774 aged 42 years.

⁴ An allowance for provisions.

⁵ Presumably quinine.

⁶ A Hindu broker.

⁷ Garratt was a tiny village between Wandsworth and Tooting. It had little political significance, but from the 1740s to the 1800s mock elections to the fictional office of ‘Mayor of Garratt’ attracted huge crowds. In 1764 Samuel Foote wrote the farce *The Mayor of Garret*.

⁸ When Ann Kingsley died in 1773, she left £100 to Susannah Ewer.

⁹ A coterie is a social or literary circle.

¹⁰ Warren Hastings (1732-1818) was Governor of Bengal 1772-1774.

¹¹ John Ludd Fenner was a cousin on his mother’s side. He was born on 31st March 1749 and was 4th mate on the Colebrooke. He died on the voyage home on 14th November 1772 off Cape Verde and was buried at sea.

¹² Henry Pascal was 1st mate of the Colebrooke.

¹³ John Pearson, Lieutenant Fireworker in the Bengal Army, died in 1771 (FiBiS record).

¹⁴ India House in Leadenhall Street; Thomas Kingsley was employed there.

¹⁵ Shah Alam.

¹⁶ Now known as Reunion.

¹⁷ Now known as Murshidabad.

¹⁸ An Indian weight, officially about 2 lb.

¹⁹ The Duke of Albany was lost on the Long Sand on 25th July 1772.