

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER



CURRY & RICE

ON FORTY PLATES

The Ingredients of Social Life at "Our Station" in India

CAPTAIN GEORGE FRANCKLIN ATKINSON

THE CUSTODIAN PAPERS

CATALOGUE MONOGRAPH NO. 05

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER · BASEL · 2026

INDOPHILES · BIBLIOPHILES · ICONOPHILES

THE CUSTODIANS

A Manifesto for Books

*A rare book is not merely owned. It is received from the past,
protected in the present, and entrusted to the future.*

We believe that the finest books connected with the Indian subcontinent are more than bibliographical objects. They are vessels of memory: witnesses to encounters between languages, faiths, empires, artists, printers and readers. Their paper bears the pressure of history; their images preserve worlds that have vanished; their survival imposes a duty upon the present custodian.

The Eye of the Beholder brings together books selected predominantly for their civilizational significance, beauty, rarity and power of transmission. Scholarship is part of stewardship. Every object deserves to be understood before it is offered, and every collector deserves a description that distinguishes evidence from assumption without diminishing the romance of discovery.

Our purpose is not simply to circulate rare material. It is to place important cultural assets with collectors who recognise that possession is temporary, but custodianship may be consequential. The book described in the following pages is offered in that spirit.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

A CIVILIZATIONAL THOUGHT

शब्दो नित्यः

Śabdo nityaḥ — the word endures.

A book outlives the hands that made it, the rooms in which it was first read, and often the political world whose habits it recorded. Yet endurance is never passive. It depends upon the discernment of successive readers: the printer who gives form to observation, the binder who gives it protection, and the collector who gives it time.

In *Curry & Rice*, the printed word is inseparable from the lithographed image. Atkinson's album survives as text, theatre, social document and material object. Its humour is immediate; its historical meanings continue to deepen.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

PREFACE

How to Read This Catalogue

This note examines a complete, early copy of Captain George Francklin Atkinson's celebrated *Curry & Rice, on Forty Plates; or, The Ingredients of Social Life at "Our Station" in India*. It has been prepared from direct examination of the supplied photographs, including the letterpress title, pictorial title, list of illustrations, dedication, preface, terminal leaf, decorated binding and binder's ticket, together with institutional and market records.

The central bibliographical problem is treated at unusual length because the first edition is not identified by a simple printed date. Surviving copies carry different publisher formulations, catalogues disagree, and the same basic work was reissued rapidly. Some authorities recognise a John B. Day issue of 1858 as the earliest state; many libraries and dealers call the undated Day & Son issue of 1859 the first edition; other records assign it to a later issue. The present note therefore uses a formulation that is both favourable and defensible: an early Day & Son issue, circa 1859, commonly catalogued as a first edition and possibly representing the first edition in conventional trade usage, while not claiming priority over the distinguishable John B. Day state.

Condition statements are based on the owner's report and supplied images: complete in text and all forty illustrations; clean internally without foxing; local repair to the first leaf and restoration to the spine; otherwise a very good, attractive copy in its original decorative publisher's cloth.

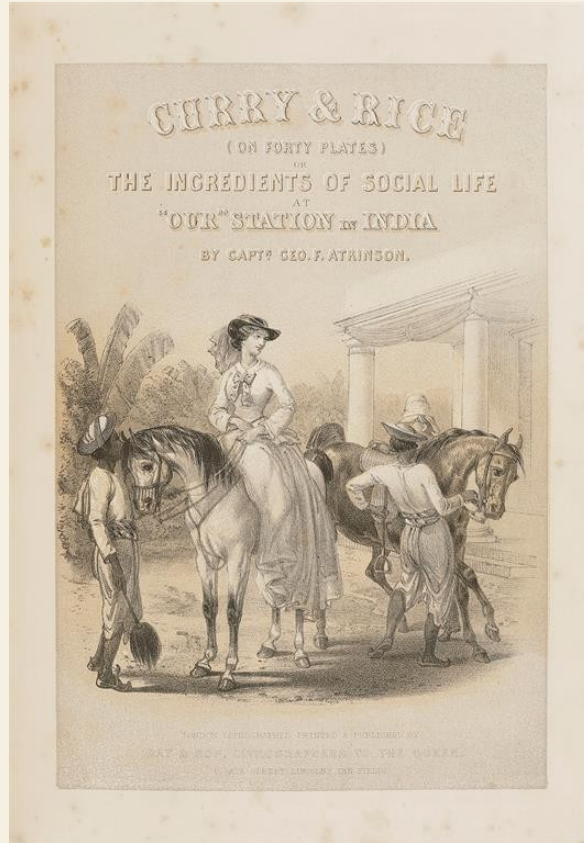


THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

CATALOGUE MONOGRAPH NO. 05

“Curry & Rice” on Forty Plates

The Ingredients of Social Life at “Our Station” in India



The lithographed vignette title: illustration no. 1 in the book's own list.

The sunny side of Indian life.

Atkinson's declared subject in the preface

THE PRESENT COPY

An Early and Complete Day & Son Issue

Author	Captain George Francklin Atkinson (1822–1859)
Title	“Curry & Rice,” on Forty Plates; or, The Ingredients of Social Life at “Our Station” in India
Imprint	London: Day & Son, Lithographers to the Queen, Gate Street, Lincoln’s-Inn Fields, [circa 1859]
Edition / issue	Early Day & Son issue; commonly catalogued as the first edition; possible first edition in conventional trade usage, but later than the distinguishable John B. Day state
Illustration	Lithographed vignette title and 39 further tinted lithographic plates: 40 illustrations in total, complete as listed
Binding	Original publisher’s orange-brown pictorial cloth, elaborately blocked in gilt and blind; binder’s ticket of Leighton, Son & Hodge
Condition	Complete; plates and text clean, without internal foxing; local repair to first leaf and restoration to spine; otherwise very good

A visual and literary panorama of the provincial Anglo-Indian station, told through forty linked scenes. Atkinson’s characters—the judge, magistrate, colonel, doctor, missionary, “sporting griff,” musicians, merchants and domestic servants—form a comic social anatomy of British India at the threshold of the Raj.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY I

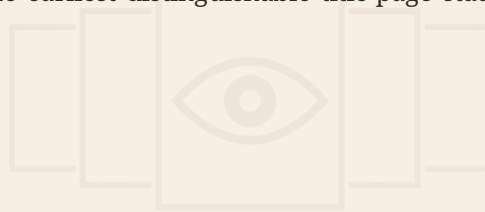
Why the First Edition Is Difficult to Name

The title page of the present copy is undated. That fact is neither a defect nor evidence of a modern reproduction. Nineteenth-century illustrated books were frequently issued without a date on the title page, and bibliographers reconstruct chronology from publisher names, addresses, advertisements, authorial credits, bindings, paper, plate states and dated institutional accessions.

For *Curry & Rice*, the difficulty is amplified by success. The work was sufficiently popular to pass through several issues or editions in a short period. The wording of the main title remained stable; the same sequence of forty subjects was retained; and sheets may have been bound or marketed after a change in the publisher's trading style. "Edition," "issue," "impression" and "state" have therefore often been used loosely in library and dealer descriptions.

A true edition requires substantial resetting or alteration of type; an issue may consist of the same printed sheets offered with a changed title leaf, imprint or binding; a state records a smaller change during production. Without a complete forme-by-forme comparison between multiple copies, the strongest responsible claim may concern priority of issue rather than a wholly new edition.

This is why contradictory catalogue statements can each contain part of the truth. A Day & Son copy may be called "first edition" because it represents the book's first widely recorded publication in 1859, yet it may not be the earliest distinguishable title-page state if a John B. Day copy dated 1858 precedes it.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY II

The John B. Day and Day & Son Evidence



“Our Station,” plate 2: the fictional settlement of Kabob, the stage on which Atkinson assembles his cast.

The most persuasive priority argument identifies an issue bearing the name John B. Day (or J. B. Day) and the year 1858. A public-domain group of plates is catalogued under the formulation “London: John B. Day, 1858,” and specialist descriptions have treated the J. B. Day name on the title and spine as an early point. The present copy instead reads “Day & Son, Lithographers to the Queen.”

Publisher names, however, are not self-interpreting. A change of imprint can mark a later issue of the same sheets rather than a separately reset edition. Moreover, major institutional catalogues record Day & Son copies under 1859, while rare-book dealers have repeatedly described comparable Day & Son copies as first editions. The Metropolitan Museum dates its Day & Son copy “1859 or later”; HathiTrust records Day & Son [1859]; Google Books describes the British Library copy as Day & Son, 1859.

The present copy is therefore demonstrably early, but the imprint alone does not permit the absolute statement “first edition, first issue.” It does permit the more nuanced, commercially meaningful description adopted here.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY III

The Authorial Credit as a Dating Clue

The present title page describes Atkinson as the author of *The Campaign in India, 1857–58*. That large-format visual record was published by Day & Son in 1859. At first sight, the credit appears to date this title leaf to 1859 or later, and therefore after any 1858 John B. Day state.

This is a strong clue, but it should not be asked to prove more than it can. Victorian publishers regularly advertised an author's associated work on a new title page while continuing to use previously printed text and plates. The altered credit may identify a reissue, a cancel title, or simply the form in which the book reached most contemporary readers. It does not establish that the body of the book was newly printed.

The relationship between the two works is important. *Curry & Rice* gives the domestic, comic, socially observant face of Anglo-India; *The Campaign in India* gives the military and commemorative face of 1857–58. Their near-simultaneous publication made Atkinson both satirist and witness. The cross-reference on the present title page would have enhanced the book's authority and marketability immediately after the Rebellion.

A later title leaf does not necessarily mean a later text block.

The key distinction between issue and edition



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY IV

Collation: What “Forty Plates” Actually Means

The supplied “List of Illustrations” resolves a frequent cataloguing error. It numbers the vignette title as no. 1, followed by nos. 2–40 from “Our Station” to “Our Departure for Home.” The correct total is therefore forty illustrations inclusive of the pictorial title—not forty plates plus an additional title.

No. 1	Lithographed vignette title
Nos. 2–40	Thirty-nine further full-page tinted lithographic illustrations
Total	Forty illustrated leaves or subjects, complete as called for
Letterpress	Accompanying descriptive text; dedication, preface, list and terminal text present

The present copy contains the complete sequence. That is commercially significant. Illustrated plate books are vulnerable to the removal of attractive scenes for framing, and incompleteness can be concealed when plates are not numbered conventionally. Here the owner has confirmed every listed illustration, while the photographed opening and terminal material show the work’s intended architecture intact.

The final text, “Our Departure for Home,” closes the same social journey opened by the vignette title. Completeness turns the album from a group of charming images into Atkinson’s full comic narrative.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY V

The Defensible Catalogue Formulation

Early Day & Son issue, circa 1859; commonly catalogued as the first edition and possibly the first edition in conventional trade usage.

This formulation gives the copy the benefit of legitimate bibliographical doubt. It recognises that respected institutions and dealers have described Day & Son copies as first editions, and that the book's publication history has not been stabilised by a modern descriptive bibliography. At the same time, it discloses the John B. Day evidence and avoids representing the present copy as the earliest known state.

For a collector, the distinction should be understood proportionately. The present copy belongs to the original publication era, carries the celebrated forty-plate programme, retains the original decorative binding, and was bound by a recognised Victorian firm. It is not a late photographic facsimile or an ordinary twentieth-century reprint. Its historical, visual and material qualities are those for which the book is collected.

If future comparison proves that the Day & Son title leaf was issued simultaneously with, or immediately after, the John B. Day state using the same sheets, the copy may properly be regarded as a variant issue of the first edition. If the John B. Day sheets can be shown to precede a resetting, the present copy would be an early later edition. Until such comparison is published, certainty should not be manufactured.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE AUTHOR

George Francklin Atkinson: Engineer, Artist, Satirist

George Francklin Atkinson was born in 1822 into a family already entangled with India, art and scholarship. His father, James Atkinson, was a surgeon in East India Company service, a Persian scholar, translator and artist. The younger Atkinson entered the Bengal Engineers and served from 1840 until his early death in 1859.

The Bengal Engineers formed one of the most technically educated arms of the Company's military establishment. Their work required surveying, drawing, construction, fortification and an unusually trained eye for terrain. Atkinson's ability to organise crowded scenes, record architecture and render social detail belongs partly to this professional culture of observation.

Yet *Curry & Rice* is not an engineer's report. It reveals a comic intelligence alive to vanity, boredom, flirtation, hierarchy and self-deception. Atkinson sketches the colonial station as a closed ecosystem in which rank is magnified by distance from Britain and small habits become public theatre. His humour is affectionate in places, acid in others, and inseparable from the assumptions of his class and period.

Atkinson's death in 1859, at only thirty-seven, froze a brief but distinctive oeuvre. The books that remain unite first-hand experience, draughtsmanship and the new reproductive power of Victorian lithography.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE OTHER BOOKS

A Compact but Remarkable Oeuvre

Pictures from the North, in Pen and Pencil; Sketched during a Summer Ramble (1848) established Atkinson as a travelling observer and illustrator. It belongs to the Victorian culture of the sketching tour: landscape, incident and personal response translated into an illustrated literary record.

The Campaign in India, 1857–58 (1859) is his monumental military work. Its tinted and hand-coloured lithographs depict troop movements, siege operations and episodes surrounding Delhi. Modern viewers must read it critically as an imperial commemoration, but it remains an important contemporary visual document of the uprising and its suppression. Fine hand-coloured copies command substantial prices.

Indian Spices for English Tables; or, A Rare Relish of Fun from the Far East (1860) extended the culinary conceit and the metropolitan appetite for Anglo-Indian humour after Atkinson's death. Its publication reflects the durable appeal of the world he had drawn.

Among these works, *Curry & Rice* is the most intimate and socially panoramic. The campaign volume records exceptional violence; *Curry & Rice* records the recurring rituals through which empire was lived—dinner, duty, sport, gossip, illness, marriage and departure.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

India Between Company and Crown

The book appeared at the most charged transition in nineteenth-century British India. The uprising of 1857 began as a military mutiny and became a much wider, regionally varied conflict. Its suppression was followed by the Government of India Act of 1858, which ended East India Company rule and transferred authority to the British Crown.

Atkinson's preface consciously offers what he calls the "sunny side" of Indian life after recent narratives of horror. That phrase is central to the book's tone. The comedy does not deny that 1857 had occurred; it is produced in its shadow. Domestic routine becomes reassurance, nostalgia and a means of restoring the recognisable social world of the station.

This timing also gives the book documentary importance. It catches Anglo-Indian society at the hinge between the Company's older provincial culture and the increasingly formal Raj. Its judges, magistrates, officers and households enact the institutions of colonial authority, but Atkinson's satire makes authority look improvised, embodied and frequently absurd.

For the modern collector, the value lies partly in this tension: the book is entertaining on the surface and historically revealing underneath. It preserves not an official proclamation but a social mood.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

A COMEDY OF TYPES

The Colonial Station as Social Theatre



“Our Judge”: official dignity becomes caricature.

Atkinson proceeds by types. Each “Our...” heading introduces a figure, place or ritual already familiar to the Anglo-Indian reader: the judge and his wife, the magistrate, colonel, padre, missionary, doctor, “spins,” band, racecourse, coffee-shop, bath, moonshee, dinner, hounds, ball and sporting excursions.

The possessive pronoun is comic and sociological. “Our” turns individuals into fixtures of the station, as though every settlement must contain a comparable specimen. Identity is produced by office, marriage, recreation and reputation. The reader is invited to recognise the type and perhaps, uncomfortably, oneself.

Caricature here works through accumulation. A posture, carriage, uniform, servant, animal or overloaded interior can disclose more than an official biography. The plates offer costumes and faces; the letterpress supplies anecdote, speech and social judgment. Together they create something close to a Victorian graphic novel.

THE THACKERAY CONNECTION

Satire under a Distinguished Patronage

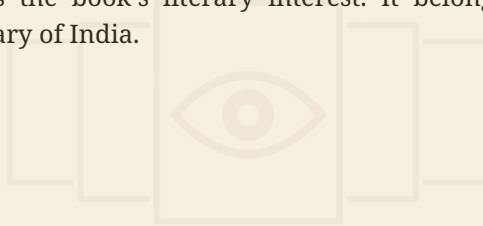
Atkinson dedicated the book to William Makepeace Thackeray, the great anatomist of vanity and social pretence. In the supplied dedication, he imagines his own “tiny vessel” following the “big men-of-war” of Thackeray’s fiction. The metaphor is modest, but the literary ambition is plain.

Thackeray had been born in Calcutta and remained imaginatively connected to India. His fiction repeatedly exposed the theatricality of rank, manners and aspiration. Atkinson transfers a comparable method to the Anglo-Indian station, where public office and private eccentricity are never far apart.

The dedication also positioned *Curry & Rice* for metropolitan readers. It signalled that this was not only an illustrated travel book but a work of comic character. The India it offered was legible through a familiar Victorian tradition of social satire.

*A small vessel in Thackeray’s wake—yet with a cargo entirely
its own.*

The association increases the book’s literary interest. It belongs beside works of Victorian caricature as well as in a library of India.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

WOMEN, MARRIAGE AND DOMESTIC POWER

The Station Beyond Official Rank



“Our Colonel’s Wife”: domestic authority, fashion and mobility in the station world.

Although offices structure the station, Atkinson repeatedly shifts attention to wives, daughters and unmarried women. “Our Judge’s Wife,” “Our Magistrate’s Wife,” “Our Colonel’s Wife,” “Our Doctor’s Wife” and “Our Spins” reveal a second hierarchy operating through hospitality, dress, matchmaking, gossip and control of social access.

These scenes are not feminist documents in a modern sense; they carry the gender stereotypes of Victorian caricature. Yet they show that colonial society could not be understood through male administration alone. The bungalow, carriage, ball and dinner table are sites where influence is exercised and reputations are made.

Marriage also functions as narrative destiny. The later plate “Our Wedding” gathers courtship, station surveillance and ceremonial display into one event. “Our Departure for Home” then reminds the reader that Anglo-Indian life was often imagined as temporary: service abroad followed, if fortune allowed, by return to Britain.

THE INDIAN PRESENCE

Reading the Colonial Gaze Critically



Domestic mobility depended upon Indian labour, animal handling and complex service relationships.

Indian figures appear throughout the plates as servants, tradesmen, musicians, grooms, cooks, teachers and attendants. They make the station function, yet Atkinson's narrative voice does not grant them equal interiority. The modern reader must recognise the asymmetry: colonial society is observed chiefly from within the British enclave.

This limitation is itself historical evidence. The pictures record a world in which racial hierarchy was naturalised through everyday arrangements—who sits, who carries, who serves, who speaks, who is named. Humour can soften power while also revealing it.

The book should therefore be neither rejected as mere imperial prejudice nor romanticised as innocent comedy. Its importance lies in being readable on several levels at once: as caricature, material art, eyewitness social history and an archive of colonial attitudes. Serious collecting allows the object to retain its beauty while making its assumptions visible.

THE GOVERNING METAPHOR

Why “Curry & Rice”?

The title converts society into a dish. “Curry” evokes heat, variety, mixture and an English shorthand for India; “rice” supplies the common base. The forty plates become ingredients, each contributing a flavour to the social life of the station.

This is an Anglo-Indian culinary metaphor rather than an ethnography of Indian food. By the mid-nineteenth century, curry had been domesticated within British taste, appearing in cookbooks and dining rooms as a portable sign of empire. Atkinson uses that familiarity to package colonial society for readers at home.

The metaphor is also structurally clever. A catalogue of characters might have felt disconnected; ingredients imply a composite whole. Judge, doctor, missionary, “nuwab,” bazaar, ball, bedroom, cook room and pig-sticking all belong to one recipe. The book’s episodic form therefore feels cumulative rather than fragmentary.

Forty ingredients; one social dish.

For collectors, the title has enduring magnetism. It is memorable, visual and unmistakably of its historical moment.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE ART OF THE BOOK

Tinted Lithography and Victorian Looking

Lithography allowed artists to draw directly on stone and preserve a freedom of line difficult to obtain through wood engraving. Tinted lithography added one or more tonal stones, giving atmosphere, modelling and a wash-like quality without the expense of full hand colouring.

In *Curry & Rice*, the method suits caricature. Architectural settings remain legible, figures retain lively contour, and pale tints unify crowded scenes. The resulting pages resemble finished drawings more than mechanically engraved illustrations.

Atkinson supplied the original designs, while professional lithographers translated them for publication. Credits visible on the plates include “Capt. G. F. Atkinson, del.” and the names of practitioners such as Thomas Ashburton Picken. The Wikimedia Commons catalogue of the work identifies engravers and lithographers including Robert Munro Bryson, F. Jones, Auguste François Laby, George McCulloch, Thomas Ashburton Picken and Edmund Walker.

This collaborative production is central to the object’s value. The book is not simply a container for text; it is a sustained programme of forty large images created by one of the leading lithographic publishers of Victorian Britain.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

DAY & SON

Lithographers to the Queen

Day & Son stood near the centre of British colour and tinted lithography. The firm's royal designation signalled technical prestige, and its imprint appears on major works of architecture, ornament, travel and empire. The address on the present title page—Gate Street, Lincoln's-Inn Fields—anchors the book in London's specialist print trade.

The publisher was capable of coordinating artists, lithographers, printers and binders on elaborate productions. *Curry & Rice* demanded consistency across forty scenes, substantial paper, carefully registered tint stones and a binding striking enough to announce the book as a gift or drawing-room object.

The survival of the imprint matters because later editions were issued by W. Thacker & Co. and in the twentieth century. A Day & Son copy remains closest to the work's original visual culture and to Atkinson's lifetime.



"Our Pack of Hounds": sport, landscape and social display rendered through tinted lithography.

THE PUBLISHER'S BINDING

A Victorian Object of Display

The supplied photographs show the original orange-brown cloth, extensively decorated in gilt and blind. The upper board carries a pictorial Indian domestic scene within an ornamental scheme; the spine is likewise elaborately worked. Such bindings were designed to be seen across a room and handled as luxury illustrated books.

A small ticket reads “Bound by Leighton, Son & Hodge,” identifying a distinguished London trade binder at 13 Shoe Lane. The ticket is not an ownership inscription. It is the binder’s discreet signature and supports the conclusion that the binding is contemporary publisher’s work rather than a modern rebinding.

The attribution sometimes made in auction catalogues to the designer Matthew Digby Wyatt is attractive but should be repeated cautiously unless the design can be tied to documentary evidence. What can be said securely is that the binding belongs to the sophisticated design culture surrounding Day & Son and the Leighton firm.

Restoration to the spine is noted, but sensitive restoration can preserve rather than diminish an important publisher’s binding. The essential collector’s point is that the original decorated cloth survives and remains integral to the book’s identity.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE FORTY SUBJECTS

A Complete Social Panorama

Movement 1

1 Vignette Title · 2 Our Station · 3 Our Judge · 4 Our Judge's Wife · 5 Our Magistrate · 6 Our Magistrate's Wife · 7 Our Colonel · 8 Our Colonel's Wife · 9 Our Padre · 10 Our Joint Magistrate

Movement 2

11 Our Mall · 12 Our German Missionary · 13 Our Doctor · 14 Our Doctor's Wife · 15 Our Invalid Major · 16 Our Spins · 17 Our Band · 18 Our Racecourse · 19 Our Coffee-Shop · 20 Our Bath

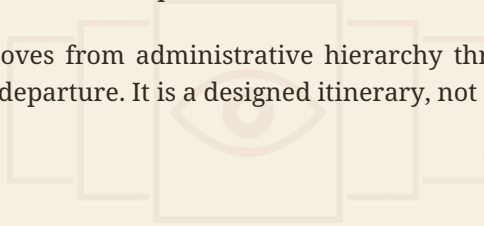
Movement 3

21 Our Sporting Griff · 22 Our Moonshree · 23 Our Burra Khanah · 24 Our Pack of Hounds · 25 Our Ball · 26 Our Tiger-Shooting · 27 Our Stage-Coaching · 28 Our Agriculturalists · 29 Our Nuwab · 30 Our Theatricals

Movement 4

31 Our Bazar · 32 Our Bed Room · 33 Our Travellers' Bungalow · 34 Our Cook Room · 35 Our Cloth Merchants · 36 Our Pig-Sticking · 37 Our Garden · 38 Our Farm Yard · 39 Our Wedding · 40 Our Departure for Home

Read in sequence, the list moves from administrative hierarchy through sociability and sport to private rooms, marriage and departure. It is a designed itinerary, not a random album.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

SELECTED PLATES I

Authority and its Caricatures



The station as stage: bungalows, roads, animals and figures distributed across a landscape of administration.

The opening plate establishes scale. British buildings occupy the settlement, but the scene's life depends on movement: riders, carts, animals and servants. Subsequent portraits narrow the focus from geography to personality.

The judge, magistrate and colonel embody three pillars of colonial authority—law, civil administration and military force. Yet Atkinson refuses monumental grandeur. Bodies, furniture, habits and family relations pull officeholders back into comedy. The result is valuable precisely because it is unofficial.

SELECTED PLATES II

Sociability, Sport and Spectacle



The hunt is both recreation and a performance of status.

Racecourse, hounds, tiger-shooting and pig-sticking occupy a large share of the book's imaginative world. Sport structured male sociability, displayed courage and horsemanship, and transformed the Indian landscape into a theatre for colonial identity.

The ball, dinner and theatricals perform a parallel function indoors. Clothing, music, food and dance maintain "Britishness" at a distance from Britain. Atkinson's eye catches both the pleasure and the effort involved.

These subjects make the volume especially desirable as an illustrated record. Individual plates appeal to collectors of sporting history, military and civil life, costume, animals and social satire; completeness preserves their relationship.

SELECTED PLATES III

Labour, Household and Departure



“Our Farm Yard”: material life, animal labour and domestic provisioning.

The later sequence enters spaces often omitted from official views: bazaar, bedroom, travellers’ bungalow, cook room, cloth merchants, garden and farm yard. These scenes reveal the material systems that supported colonial domesticity.

“Our Wedding” provides social culmination; “Our Departure for Home” provides narrative closure. The station is a world intensely inhabited yet imagined as temporary. Careers, marriages and fortunes point toward an eventual return.

The terminal leaf supplied with the present copy confirms that this arc survives intact. The finality matters: a complete copy lets Atkinson’s comedy end on its intended note of movement and memory.

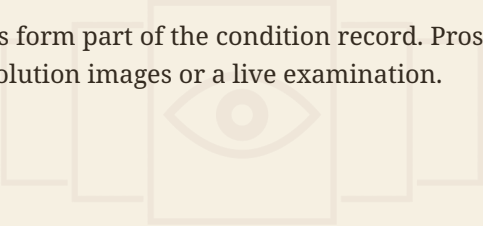
CONDITION REPORT

Complete, Clean and Attractively Preserved

Completeness	Complete in text and illustration. The vignette title and all 39 further listed lithographs are present: 40 illustrations in total.
Text and plates	Internally clean and fresh for the period; no foxing reported within the book.
Preliminaries	Dedication, preface and list of illustrations present. Local repair to the first leaf/page.
Binding	Original elaborately gilt and blind-stamped pictorial cloth, with Leighton, Son & Hodge ticket. Some restoration/repair to the spine.
Overall assessment	Very good: an attractive, complete copy with clean internal condition and limited, disclosed restoration.

For a plate book of this age, completeness and the absence of internal foxing are major strengths. The noted repairs are localised and should be understood as conservation history rather than concealed defect. The binding retains the visual presence that made the book collectible when new.

As always, the photographs form part of the condition record. Prospective custodians are invited to request additional high-resolution images or a live examination.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

RARITY AND THE MARKET

Why Complete Early Copies Are Desirable

Curry & Rice has never disappeared from bibliographical memory, but complete early copies in original decorative cloth are not common. Forty large plates create forty opportunities for loss; heavily handled gift-book bindings are vulnerable at the joints and spine; pale papers frequently fox.

Market results are dispersed because cataloguing and condition vary widely. A complete Day & Son copy in original orange cloth, catalogued circa 1860, realised approximately US\$1,431 including premium at Saffronart in January 2020. A specialist dealer has offered a restored W. Thacker second edition at £300, while other Day & Son copies have been priced higher or lower according to completeness and condition. These comparisons demonstrate that venue, presentation and bibliographical confidence materially affect value.

The present copy combines the features most likely to matter to a serious collector: early Day & Son imprint, full complement of forty illustrations, clean interiors, original decorative binding and identified Victorian binder. Its limited repairs are balanced by completeness and visual integrity.

The work attracts overlapping collecting communities: India, the events and aftermath of 1857, Victorian illustrated books, lithography, social satire, colonial sport and publisher's bindings.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE COLLECTOR'S CASE

Why This Book Merits a Place in an Indian Library

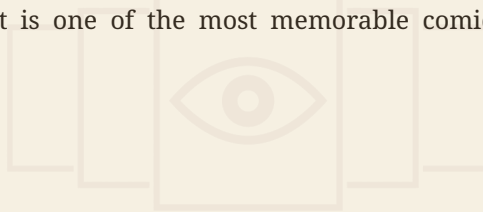
Many books about nineteenth-century India describe policy, war or travel. *Curry & Rice* does something rarer: it turns ordinary colonial life into a complete visual comedy. It records how empire ate, dressed, travelled, judged, gossiped, hunted, danced, married and went home.

Its images are immediately engaging, yet the volume rewards serious study. The Thackeray dedication places it within Victorian satire. The forty-plate programme places it within the history of lithography. The post-1857 publication places it at the birth of the Raj. The binding places it within the golden age of publisher's cloth.

The book's colonial gaze requires critical reading, but that does not lessen its importance. Cultural assets are not valuable because they flatter the present. They matter because they preserve the evidence from which the past can be understood.

A complete social world, caught at the instant Company India became the Raj.

For a collection devoted to the printed and painted image of India, this is not merely an attractive illustrated book. It is one of the most memorable comic panoramas of Anglo-Indian society.



THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

CATALOGUE CONCLUSION

A Possible First Edition in the Broad Sense—And Unquestionably an Early, Complete and Collectible Copy

The present copy should be described with precision and confidence: London, Day & Son, [circa 1859], an early issue commonly catalogued as the first edition and possibly the first edition in conventional trade usage, though apparently later in title-page state than the John B. Day 1858 issue. It is complete with forty illustrations inclusive of the vignette title, internally clean without foxing, and preserved in the original elaborately decorated publisher's cloth with the binder's ticket of Leighton, Son & Hodge.

Its appeal does not depend upon forcing an absolute bibliographical claim. The copy stands securely within the book's first publication moment and retains the visual, literary and material qualities that made *Curry & Rice* celebrated. Atkinson's satire is lively; his social record is unusually broad; the plates remain a delight to examine; and the binding gives the volume genuine presence.

For the collector of India, this is a desirable early copy of an enduring classic—complete, attractive and accompanied by a transparent account of the question that makes it bibliographically intriguing.

SELECT SOURCES

British Library copy via Google Books (Day & Son, 1859, 90 pp.); Metropolitan Museum of Art, object 65.601.1; HathiTrust catalogue records; UCSB Library, "The Coming of the Raj"; Wikimedia Commons, Atkinson's 1858 plate category; Saffronart, Antiquarian Books Auction, January 2020; Jonkers Rare Books; Wellcome Collection; Rare Book Society of India digital copy. Full URLs and access dates retained in the research record.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

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