



### Our Foreign Letter.

#### THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL, KANDY.

PERHAPS you will like to hear how things progress in our hospital here. There are many things to be thankful for: the mortality has decreased, the patients get well much sooner, bed-sores are almost unknown, wounds heal by first intention, and the patients are bright and cheerful. We still run out of all our surgical stores, cotton-wool, lint and tow, and I was told this morning, as I have often been told before, there was no lint or cotton-wool for the dressings. What we applied for three months ago has not come yet. All our supplies come from the Government Colonial Stores in Colombo, which must be conducted in a curious manner. When an order for twelve pounds is given, one pound is sent; when a water-proof sheet, an eye-chapper, or papier-maché dressing-trays are asked for, answer is returned, "none in stock," and as we never get them, I suppose they never receive a fresh supply. It is the same with our clothing for the patients. Our equipment for this half-year has not come yet, and I do not suppose it will until the middle of March, by which time the old set will be dropping to pieces. However, we must hope on, hope ever, that matters in time will improve.

Having a Night Superintendent has been a decided step in the right direction. It has left us with only two Sisters for the day work, but thanks to our Bishop and his representations to the Governor, a new Sister has been allowed us, who is even now on her voyage out here. We have also been promised that our bungalow shall be enlarged; the rooms are so tiny, and it is built right up against a bank, so at present it is the hottest spot in the building.

I think everyone who comes to see us is impressed by the sight of our Hospital, nestled down amid its luxuriant foliage—all the terraces are turfed, and the green is so soft and restful to the eyes. We are getting quite a little garden of our own. Dr. Trimen, from the Botanical Gardens at Peridenuja, has given us a great many shrubs, and other kind friends are giving us cuttings of plants. After the next monsoon, in April, we expect to be quite pretty.

The Governor and Lady Havelock have been most kind to us. Lady Havelock is very much interested in a Hospital for Women, which she has been the means of collecting money to build in Colombo. The foundation-stone was laid in December. Sir Arthur Havelock and she both came round this Hospital when they were in Kandy last year. I had no idea that a Governor took such personal interest in everything.

The great entertainments in Kandy seem to be weddings; there have been a great many since we came. I have not been to any myself but Miss Havelock's, but the daughter of the Government

Agent was married last week; the Matron of this Hospital was married a short time before we came, and many others during the year. On these occasions the military folk seem to come up from Colombo, the planters come down from their estates and the little town is full to overflowing.

There is an A.B.C.D. Club; the meaning of these mystical letters I am not sure about, but what they do is to give dances, play cricket matches, have three boats on the lake, and I fancy nearly everyone in Kandy belongs to it. We are out of Kandy, and being engaged in work, our only recreation is going to the Library and reading the papers. We did go to one concert a fortnight ago, which we heard was good; if so, what must their inferior concerts be like! No more music for me while I am here; we came away before it was half finished.

The thing most worth seeing is the Perihara, the procession of the Tooth—Buddha's Tooth, the temple of which is here. I have not seen the inmost shrine of this, for one must be there before seven a.m., and at that time we are on duty, but I must do so before I leave, but I did go to the Perihara. It is quite unique. I do not suppose that there is a man, woman, or child within miles of Kandy who does not go to it, and I do not wonder, for barbaric splendour I have seen nothing equal to it. It lasts a week and is a procession, the origin of which they say is Tamil.

One of the old Kandyan kings married a Tamil wife and she insisted on having her procession. A Tamil prince, so the story goes, coming to Kandy was disgusted at finding their Mahommedan festival here, "Oh! no," says the wily old king, "this is our ceremony in honour of our Tooth," and ordered one of the outer shrines to be carried in the procession.

There are about thirty to forty elephants, the largest one being the Tooth elephant, most splendidly bedizened and having the fifth outer shrine (I think there are eight in all) fastened on its back. One elephant is on each side and the men who ride them throw pangipanni—the Temple flower and others—on to the cloth on which the shrine is placed. Devil dancers gyrate before and after; torches are flaring and some of the Kandyan chiefs march, in all their quaint attire, some thirty yards of material wound round them and a hat just like a red sofa cushion on their heads.

When the procession has wound round the town, it comes up to the Temple, the Tooth elephant walks inside to the flight of steps. The senior chief walks up these steps, has a ewer brought, in which he washes his hands, wipes them on a fine cloth, then has another cloth placed upon his outstretched arms, the shrine is placed on them and he goes up and into the inner chamber to restore it to its place, but we could go no further, for crowds of Buddhists came up behind us and they were afraid of a riot, so we were invited to come next morning when we might see the place where the wonderful Tooth was kept.

Coming down we heard the people grumbling: see these Christians who keep us from praying to our God. However, had we not been there I am sure they would not have got in, there was too dense a crowd.

S. C. McL.

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