

It has happened rather curiously that I have done more work in that little house than in any other anywhere, not always for the same family, for it is customary in Las Palmas for mutual friends to lend each other their houses when one is, perhaps, going to England for the summer, and the other's house happens to be in a less pleasant situation. So in that first summer I nursed my doctor's wife through her confinement in that house, and in the late autumn of the same year I had rather a curious case of fever there. It ran a three weeks' course, and in some respects was distinctly typhoidal, but it certainly lacked the most striking features of that disease, and possessed others of a malarial character, so that it was ultimately decided to have been probably caused by the excavation near the house of ground which had been used for some years past for tipping refuse on. And last, but not least, it was in this house this last winter that I had a task to perform which was altogether beyond my powers to carry through adequately. Can anything be more dispiriting than to be in the house of people whom you know and like well, and whom you are most anxious to serve to the utmost of your power, with that power at its lowest ebb through illness, and with more work to do in the twenty-four hours than the day and night together will stretch to. My former patient again with hæmorrhage, aggravated by his having become a confirmed morphia maniac (whilst he was in bed both servants left, the one at an hour's notice in a fit of temper, the other equally quickly because I discovered that she was on the extreme verge of a miscarriage), just as he was able to sit up I was taken away for one day to attend to a man who was dying at the hotel, returning at night to find my patient's wife very poorly; she went to bed for three weeks with pleurisy, etc., and during that time both the children were ill; the elder with a sharp attack of influenza, the younger, a sweet lassie of six months, with croup and bronchitis, unluckily, just when she was being weaned because of her mother's illness. The poor mite was very sadly indeed, in a steam tent for a week, and time after time I feared she would die in my arms. Here was a case where a fire would have been very useful, both for ventilating purposes and also for the bronchitis kettle and Benger. The former had to stand on a small paraffin stove, and the latter I made over a spirit lamp. The baby needed constant care day and night, and the others had to pretty well take their chance, but they all got well ultimately, and for the last few days one of the hotel nurses came daily for a few hours so that I could get some rest.

It was in this house also that I tried my hand at Canary housekeeping, which again reminded me of a similar experience which I had had in India about twelve years ago.

There are very few shops worthy of the name in Las Palmas, two or three large stores profess to supply everything necessary, but they are a perpetual disappointment in reality, and a multitude of small Spanish shops, chiefly tobacconists. Meat, milk, vegetables, fruit, fish, and poultry, all come from the Market, an early morning Market held in a fine Market Hall. A universal custom is for the housekeeper to make a list over night of everything required for the next day's household consumption. This is given generally to the cook, sometimes to the table boy (if he be trustworthy) together with two sums of money,

the larger to pay for the articles on the list, the smaller to be spent on the servants' daily food, a certain number of centimos being given for each servant. One of the few good traits about Spanish servants is their capacity for early rising, the marketer is always back in the house in time for the fresh fruit to be served for the early breakfast, and for the fish, meat, etc., to be sorted out of the big basket, and put into cool places, before the day gets hot. A *really good* marketer is an immense assistance to a housekeeper here. She must be on good terms with her fellow servants, or endless quarrels will arise from her having spent their money amiss. She must be able to show a wise discrimination in purchasing what happens to be best in the market each day (for it is quite impossible to write definite orders without knowing what is obtainable); and she must also be perfectly honest, for this system of purchase leaves room for much petty speculation. I never felt happy about market milk, for, being collected from so many small farms, so many sources of contamination existed. It is, of course, always boiled; but I much preferred for my patients use fresh milk, drawn either from goats at our own door or from cows kept near by; but even the latter arrangement had its drawbacks. I was puzzled one day by the non-appearance of the evening milk at the usual hour, and on enquiry, was told that the cows must finish ploughing a certain field before they could be brought home to be milked! Water is another source of anxiety, there is a fairly good supply brought down in pipes from the mountains and carried to the hotels, but our house was not connected with it; every drop of water we used for any purpose was carried to us; for baths, washing, and cooking, in small barrels on a woman's head from a well about half a mile away; for drinking, in old wine bottles packed in fern in a "seral" (a kind of pannier made from palm leaves) on a donkey's back from a mountain spring about eight miles away. Delicious water it is, slightly aerated, and supposed to possess some tonic properties; but if it was a "fiesta," or if the spring were unapproachable through stormy weather, then the old man and his donkey simply did not appear for days together, and this was sometimes very awkward, for at that time he supplied the whole neighbourhood, so that everyone would be short of water at once.

Our American Letter.

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

AS yet there has been no official statement made to the public as to the detailed organization of nursing the wounded during the War. But it is probable the War Department will take charge of the nursing of the soldiers, and the Red Cross the relief work in Cuba, amongst the suffering natives, as the rescue and care of these poor people is very near to the heart of our President, Mr McKinley. Surgeon-General Sternberg, of the War Department, is deputizing the National Association of Ladies, called "The Daughters of the Revolution," to secure nurses for the Army. In each State these ladies (the descendants of those who took part in the War of Independence), have a powerful organization, and in Baltimore they have already engaged nurses from the Johns Hopkins' Hospital and sent

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)