

## Our Foreign Letter.

### A VISIT TO THE CIVIL HOSPITAL, PORT LOUIS MAURITIUS.



Up country we had left cool air and a grey sky, but as we emerged from the railway station at Port Louis it seemed quite another climate,

and immediately we sought refuge from the sun under our sunshades. Through a deserted and waste part of the town, the result of hurricane and fire, we walked, passing several lepers begging, and soon had met and were being conducted by the Medical Superintendent of the Island to the hospital.

Ascending a few steps to the verandah, we entered, and found ourselves in a large, cool hall, the presence of this spacious hall being no doubt due to the fact that the building was originally a college. The sight of a white linen coat hanging in the house surgeon's office conjured up visions of my old hospital life, and the heterogenous mass of papers and letters told that hospital administration was no easier task here than at home. We were charmed with the pathological room and would have liked to spend much more time with the microscope and the various prepared slides showing the micro-organisms peculiar to tropical disease. But we had much before us, so, with a backward glance at the microscope and, on my part, a mental vow to come back again, we started for the wards. "Now," said our medical friend, "as nurses you will see some things that you will not quite approve of, but remember lavatory accommodation, etc., cannot, all at once, be brought to the state of perfection found in the hospitals at home." The wards were large, lofty and airy, and although several of the wards were full and the patients coloured, we met with no unpleasant odours. It was a strange sight, those rows of black faces on the white pillows, and the convalescing men sitting up in their blue suits on the top of the bedclothes. Here, a poor emaciated Chinaman with empyæma, there, a little Creole boy with the typical tubercular look, and, a little further on, an Indian making a good recovery after operation for hernia.

We were very much struck with the neatness of the temperature charts in this ward, and remarking on it, the Medical Superintendent informed us they were kept by the "orderlies"—Creole boys. Here as all over the Colony the temperature is taken in centigrade.

Crossing, we came to the female block, which is under the superintendence of the Roman Catholic Sisters. Here, as found in all the wards, are broad shady verandahs surrounding the latter. These wards were looking very smart with their highly polished floors, and the *only* screen, with its orthodox red hangings, was placed in a conspicuous position: evidently the Sisters were very proud of it. Like

the male patients, the convalescent women, here and there, sat cross-legged on their respective beds, dressed in blue cotton skirts and "peignoirs." In a small ward was a "dark but comely" patient looking very cheerful and placid. A few days previously the surgeons had removed from her a large ovarian cyst. Glancing at her diet card, I observed that already she was on chicken.

Mounting a wooden staircase, we came to the obstetric ward, which was well filled, and, to our delight, found twins of a few hours old. As there were no cots they were placed on a bed next to that on which their very comfortable looking mother was lying. Passing one bed with a very emaciated occupant, I inquired of one of the doctors, what the case was. Imagine my horror and surprise when he informed me that the patient had come in to have the placenta removed after retaining it several days from the time of delivery, "and, practically, no symptoms of sepsis," I was likewise informed. (Verily, those women must have a special Providence!) Before leaving the female block, we were shown a typical tropical ulcer on a leg; they are of common occurrence amongst the coloured population.

A very fine dispensary, where many assistants were busy, occupied another block, and we there saw a splendid X-ray apparatus, which had just been imported from Paris.

In the linen room, the Sisters were busy mending and arranging the linen, every article was marked several times in black ink—"Civil Hospital." On one pillowslip, the familiar legend formed quite a lattice pattern, on the white background. The reason for this profuse marking is obvious, when one has discovered that the average Indian and Creole has no eighth commandment.

Last of all, we visited the hospital kitchen which, like all Mauritian "cooking houses," is apart from the main building. Here we found large pailfuls of well-cooked rice, a pot of quite appetising-looking stew, and smaller quantities of meat and chicken.

As one looked round at the primitive methods of cooking employed by these men, and the satisfactory results, one wondered in an amused manner, how the average cook of our home hospitals would feel amongst such surroundings. Here and there, on the scorched grass under the trees, squatted the convalescent patients. Returning to the main building, we took farewell of the Sisters, and while admiring their calm sweet countenances, one unconsciously sighed heavily as the eye rested on their septic black habits. Thanking Dr. Lorans and the medical staff very heartily for so kindly showing us round, we wended our way to the railway station, well pleased with our morning visit.

ISABEL H. PENNIE.

During a recent visit of the Court to Windsor the Queen paid a surprise visit to St. Andrew's Hospital, Clewer, and visited the children's ward, to which she sent a large consignment of toys on the following day. Her Majesty's interest in hospitals has also been shown recently by the subscription which she has forwarded to Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Marylebone Road, W., of which she is Patron.

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