

## Our Foreign Letter.

OFF DUTY.



Isn't it delightful, the first morning after one has finished, satisfactorily, a heavy private case, to wake and think one can be lazy for one morning at least? Several times during the night I awoke with a start, thinking I heard "baby" cry, and as I lie looking out at the sunrise away beyond the bamboo hedge, and the waving green cane fields, I wonder how "King Baby" has slept, and if he misses his nurse as much as she misses her little soft bundle of flannel and pink flesh. Bang! there is someone taking the iron bar off the shutters of her bedroom window. In this nest of thieves, it is considered absolutely necessary to safeguard one's property by barring every door and window in the bungalow; but to me, who has slept all her life with wide open windows, it is impossible. Ah, well! the thief will get a big disappointment who rifles my boxes, and if he stifles my shrieks with his horrid black hands, then I should advise my successor to do as others do. Well! there is no use attempting to sleep any more, for I am wide awake; it is always so; in my old probationer days it was the same; every ordinary morning, when the dormitory maid put her head in at the door, and said, "'Alf past six, nurse!" I was so sleepy my lips could scarcely say, "Thank you!" and as I sat up groaning and rubbing my eyes, a wicked desire took possession of me to shoot that innocent maid. But, when the eagerly looked for "day off" came, I woke with the lark, and was usually lying awake reading or musing, as each door was tapped loudly at, and that "'Alf past six, nurse" was repeated along the corridor. Now, I wonder if I can reach that table without getting out of bed! There! Safely accomplished! and I have on my bed a collection of *Nursing Journals* and British newspapers which have come in by the French mail yesterday. But, before I begin to split the wrappers, I lift the lid of a little box and say "Good Morning" to a number of precious photographs. As I have not sufficient glass frames to protect all my "faces" from those wretched beetles, and cannot bear the idea of returning one day to find the "Pater" minus his nasal organ, or the sweetest little woman in the world with her tenderly dark eyes eaten away, I relegate the most dear to the obscurity of a pasteboard box. Tap! tap! and with a grinning "Bon jour, Mademoiselle," a Creole woman enters with my café au lait. The latter discussed, I am smiling at some of the home truths in the editorial on

"Ah! this is good!" and I lazily lift my mosquito net, and, with a deft twist, fling it over the top of the bed.

"Patients to order" when a splash interrupts me, and, glancing across at a shelf above my washstand, I see that the breeze entering from the window has blown a parson into my hand basin, and there, with a fresh gust of wind, goes a "pro" in all the dignity of cap and apron after him. Having rescued them from a watery grave, and mopped them both dry with my face towel, I return to my bed and "The Twentieth Century Probationer." Tap! tap! "Bon jour, Madame!" Whoever is this, at my sitting-room door? A beggar, I suppose, so I shall lie quite still. Tap! tap! tap! "Bon jour, Madame, dhoby!" Well! Upon my word! here is that dhoby with my clean linen, at this unearthly hour, so, slipping my feet into a pair of wool slippers, which once clung to my propellers, but have, by wear, stretched to the size of small canoes, and hastily throwing on a dressing gown, I sally forth from my room to interview the Indian washerwoman. "Now, you are going to catch it, my ebony beauty," I mutter as I clutch my laundry list, and the memory of broken and missing pearl buttons flashes across my brain. A month has elapsed since I last saw her, and her gaunt appearance now gives me quite a shock. Then she was plump and sleek; now the nose and earrings appear to be too heavy, and the formerly bright black eyes are dull and sunken. Before I inquire I know that she has been, and still is, suffering from malaria, and the wrath dies out of my heart as I give her some quinine, and mildly point to the spaces on my print frocks vacated by buttons. In my cash book I jot down the amount paid away before I should forget. Now-a-days I am very businesslike; at least, I am training myself to be, because I think if I cannot keep account of my own private expenditure, how shall I, in a satisfactory manner, give account, in some future time, of the money of some public institution?

Ah! there is Mrs. B.'s "chokrah" in his white suit and gay red sash coming into the compound with a letter, and making tracks, through the palms, to the nurse's wing of the bungalow. It is an invitation to lunch, and, as I answer this kind note, the thought comes to me, how refreshing it is to meet real disinterested kindness in this life of rush and scramble, where each seems to be thinking how he can best advance his interests, regardless of the well-being of his neighbour. It is time I went to bathe and dress, so that I may start the hundred and one things I wish to do, first and foremost being the darning of a pile of stockings. (No nurse, I can guarantee, wears out her socks more quickly than I do.) "Good gracious! There is the post boy going up to the Secretary's door with a telegram. Is it a case, I wonder? Anyhow, I am off to the bath-room. Good morning!

ISABEL H. PENNIE.

The directors of the Glasgow Maternity Hospital are appealing for £80,000 to build and equip a new hospital, as the work has quite outgrown the accommodation at present provided.

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