Our Foreign Letter.

IN PARIS AGAIN.

By a Guest at the Salpêtrière.

I left Syria in January last, when complete anarchy reigned. We had had seven governors since the new constitution in Turkey. Some had run away, some had been recalled, and one of them had been pursued and stoned out of Beyrout. The Turks had lost their grip, the Moslems had lost their nerve, and the Christians had lost their heads. I got on board a French boat, where, a few days previously, an English lady had been murdered—whether by a fellow passenger or one of the crew is still a mystery. I was the only lady passenger on board, with four gentlemen. The captain, doctor, stewardesses, and stewards were so unnerved that I had to try to comfort them by telling them that murders were not daily occurrences on board ships, and that precisely because such a thing had happened once it was not likely to happen again. All the same, I was glad when, after a very rough passage, we landed at Port Said without further crimes. I felt myself to a very great extent on British *terra firma*; but, alas! earthly security is but temporary. I had only been a few days in Cairo when I met a procession of Egyptians; it was a strike, and this was a demonstration *à la Franca*! Another few days, and the students of the native university also had a strike against their professors, which took a serious and political turn. But this was nothing in comparison to the open rebellion of the Egyptians against British rule—their cry: "Egypt for the Egyptians," complicated by the remonstrances of the Copts, that Egypt belonged to them equally, causing many disturbances in the bazaars and native quarters.

Having given three lectures (one in French and two in English) on the rights of women, which the Egyptian Press reported sympathetically in several languages, I left Egypt just when the Secretary of State for War was sending out fresh troops to increase and strengthen the garrisons, for not only the English but all Europeans began to feel the insecurity of life in Egypt.

The murder on board the French boat had caused such a sense of uneasiness that sooner than tempt the gods again (for who cares to be murdered in her cabin?) I took a passage on board a Norddeutcher boat. We ate much "schweinfleisch" and "lambfleisch," and everything was so calm on board and on the sea that one began to look upon strikes and murders as myths, and policemen and soldiers as unnecessary luxuries, until we landed at Marseilles, when we found that communication with Paris by letter, wire, or telephone was a complete impossibility. There was a united strike in Paris, and it almost seemed that the world was at a standstill. Instead of the promised wire to Mme. Jacques and to M. Mesureur of my arrival at Marseilles, and the time of my visit at the Salpêtrière, I took the train and went to the Hôtel Continental (so full of memories of the last Congress), and then took a cab to the Assistance Publique to announce to M. Mesureur my arrival. Of course, he scolded me for not having gone straight to the Ecole, where Mme. Jacques was prepared for my visit. "You will not have the gilt luxuries of the hotel," he said, "but I hope you will feel more 'at home,' and both Madame Jacques and the pupils are looking forward to your visit."

I remembered Madame Jacques as Mlle. Duconseil. That when she married she still continued to occupy the position of Directrice seemed an impossibility to English ideas of discipline. I expressed this point of view, to which opinion M. André Mesureur replied: "C'est d'après nos idées Francaises." That an active Matron or nurse should have a right to marry! How strange! With us it is either a profession or a husband. "What woman can serve the two?" I inquired. "The husband counts for nothing in the professional work of the Directrice; we are unconscious of his existence in the school." Thus told, this set me thinking deeply, and we passed to other matters.

There was so much to talk about, so many points to be considered. The face of M. Mesureur lighted up with the joy of a father who talks of his children and of his hopes for their future as he spoke of the pupils in the nursing school of the Salpêtrière.

Postes, telegraphes, and *telephones* were at last opened, and with feelings of relief that the world had become alive again, I took a cab and drove off to the Salpêtrière by dinner time. The fiacre had barely reached the gates when a large number of young fairies ran out and greeted me, each taking a bundle, a parcel, a holdall, and even my heavy trunks between them, and before I knew it I was in the large hall, and then seated in the office where Madame Jacques came in and greeted me with her sweet face and winning smile.

Again it seemed to me that a whole lot of fairies took me up to my apartments, which were those of the late surveillante, and where I had a suite of four rooms and bathroom. Flowers and palms brightened up the rooms, and in the dining-room the table was laid for eight persons—viz., for the six pupils who are to go to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in June, Madame Jacques, and myself. Six bright, happy, young girls, full of joy at the thought of the happiness which their profession was giving them and all it had in store for them. Six May Queens, six débutantes at their first ball, could not have looked brighter and happier; and again, like fairies, they rose and did all the waiting at table, full of merriment and *joie de vivre*.

When dinner was over we went downstairs to the large "Salle de Réunion," where tea was served. As we entered, 150 or more young nurses rose to greet me. It is impossible to describe the thrill of joy their youth and beauty imparted to me. They sang, they played the piano and guitar, they recited, and they danced peasant dances. Evil Sultans, murders, massacres, strikes, Egyptians, British soldiers, and Ministers of War all faded away be-

previous page next page