

## Our Foreign Letter.

### CHRISTMAS DAY IN AN EASTERN HOSPITAL.

The 25th of December! I wore the thinnest white dress I possess, and even then felt overcome with the heat. I could scarcely realise it was Christmas Day. While you in England were singing "See Amid the Winter Snow," we were rejoicing in the most brilliant sunshine.

For several days before we were all as busy as bees in our off duty time, decorating the wards with festoons of many coloured flowers, flags, and real palm branches, some of which were 9 ft. in length; of these we could have as many as we wanted; we had only to send a couple of servants, Arabs, of course, to the biarras, and they soon returned with a cart-load of them, for the owners of these beautiful orange groves, where the palm trees grow, were very happy to contribute something to the English hospital.

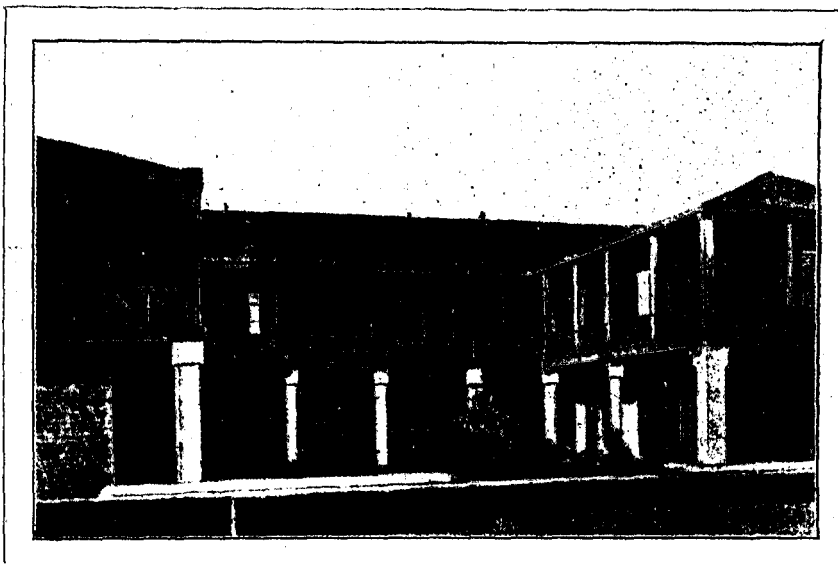
Instead of a fir, we had to use an olive tree for our Christmas tree. This was for the women and children, and was placed in the centre of the largest ward on Christmas morning after the patients' dinner had been served.

You will wonder what we gave them for dinner, and as I am sure you will never guess, I had better tell you. There was no roast beef and no plum pudding, but something the Arabs like much better. The first dish was a sort of stew of boiled rice and small pieces of mutton with it, and the second was a cake, made of all sorts of grains and meat, very finely minced and cooked for a long time; it is called "Kibb-by," and is a favourite dish with Orientals, and even Europeans get very fond of it. As a rule, the patients sleep from 1.30 to 3 p.m., but all of them, women and children alike, were far too excited to sleep that day; they could only look at the beautiful Christmas tree, laden with dolls and toys of every kind, and exclaim: "Ya ageeby!" (How wonderful). All around the tree, amongst large branches of foliage, we put bourdkhan-hindi, a sort of very large grape fruit, about four times the size of those we get in England; Indian oranges

the Arabs call them, and they do not eat them as we do in England or America. They preserve them, as limes are preserved in India, with a great quantity of sugar, something like candied peel. This bright coloured fruit added much to the beautiful appearance of our Christmas tree.

"Tea," which consisted of weak tea for a few of the patients, and boiled milk, bread, and olives for the rest, was served at 4 o'clock. This was a meal "eaten in haste," for throughout the wards there was an air of impatience for the tree to be dismantled, each patient being eager for his or her present. A great many visitors had been invited, all the English community and a number of old patients. These arrived in their best attire, and greetings were exchanged in many languages equivalent to "A happy Christmas," "the same to you," etc. "Tea" being over, one of the English doctors came in to the "Christmas Ward," in which most of the patients had been collected, and

after a general salutation, told them something about the "Feast" we were keeping this Christmas in honour of the Child-Christ who came into the world nearly 2,000 years ago to save them and us and the whole world from sin, and who, though unseen, is with us still to guide and



The Hospital, Jaffa.

direct our lives and to teach us by His own life, laid down for us on the Cross, that there is no greater happiness than that of spending one's life for others. "Soon," he added, "you will all be receiving your gifts from the Christmas tree, but we do so long for you to realize in your hearts today the unspeakable gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." After the doctor's short address, we sang the beautiful old Christmas hymn, "Venite Adoremus, Dominus," not in Latin nor in English, but in Arabic. The Arabs are not a musical race; their own songs are very monotonous and rather weird at times, but they sang our Christmas carol with all their might, and it had the true ring of joy and gladness in it. When the green shutters were closed in order to darken the ward, a hundred little candles were lighted, and you should have heard the shouts of the children! Then followed a hush of suppressed excitement, as in came a little

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