

## Peregrinations.—1.

"Have you heard?"

In a very serious tone, and with an ominous expression, the question was addressed to me on the morning of my departure.

"Ober-Ammergau is under water and the theatre is in danger of collapse."

This did not give me an appetite for breakfast! The authority for the unwelcome news was the English Press, and when I thought thereon my spirits revived.

"Don't go," urged my apprehensive friend. Not go! when the fruition of my hopes of many years was within sight. Was I to be turned from my purpose by a mere rumour, an uncorroborated statement, when my cherished ticket had been taken weeks before and my plans made? I might never see the great Play at all.

I started, met the friend who was going with me at the appointed time and place, and we left that night. At intervals along the route I enquired eagerly about the floods in Bavaria. No one seemed able to tell us much until we reached Munich, and then the accounts were very reassuring. That there had been floods no one denied, but the waters had returned to their natural courses, and the Play had not been interrupted and the theatre stood firm. (Moral—stand firm to your purpose!) It was very obvious that the authorities were as anxious not to stem the tide of foreign visitors to Bavaria as they were to stem the tide of the less welcome invasion. There was sufficient evidence that the heavy rains had done some devastating work when, at a wayside station midway between Munich and Ober-Ammergau, an excited official entered the carriages and told us that we must all get out at once. The floods had washed away part of the railway and with it the embankment. The train crawled up to the edge of the yawning chasm; we then climbed down the embankment, carrying our *handgepäck*, and up the other side, where the train waited for us.

Ober-Ammergau at last! my Ultima Thule! It was like another world, this quiet, beautiful Bavarian village, surrounded by guardian hills, chief among which is the great rocky crag called the *Kofel* rearing its summit above the rest, surmounted by a cross immediately over the village like its guardian-in-chief.

The spirit of the Passion Play seemed to rest upon the place.

The courtesy and hospitality, the smiling faces, the long hair which softened the faces of the men, and the picturesque dress of the children and some of the adults; the entire absence of newspaper boys, shrieking the latest turf news or hideous crime, and the glaring and obtruding posters proclaiming the same, which hit the eye everywhere in our big modern cities, all combined to make the contrast felt by those who dwell in them.

Our host—"St. Thomas"—a skilled carver, received us with impulsive courtesy, and showed us, in the absence of his wife, to our tiny but exquisitely clean bedrooms.

A steady, relentless downpour of rain did not bode well for the morrow; however, to my frequent

question, "What about to-morrow?" I always received the confident reply, "It will be fine to-morrow"; and, sure enough, "The dripping clouds divided and the sun looked down and smiled"—smiled radiantly out of a cloudless blue sky.

Shortly before 8 a.m. the entire village appeared to be in the hands of a peaceful invading force, an allied army of foreigners, speaking many languages. From every road and lane of the village they emerged, 4,000 strong, all centralising towards one point—the Theatre. Silently and quickly all took their places, for punctually at eight the play began. To describe the representation would occupy too much time and space, but, if the Editor will permit me, I would like to epitomise my impressions.

The Play was wonderful from beginning to end, characterised by deep reverence, simplicity, and devotion. Acting, as such, does not exist; each man and woman takes the part allotted to them—by the Council of the Passion Play—and makes it his and her own, throwing into it all the realism and pathos with which centuries of faithful allegiance to their vow has inspired them.

A tableau, taken from Old Testament History, immediately precedes every scene of the drama which it foreshadows. They all follow in quick succession. In order to appreciate the Play as it deserves to be appreciated, it is almost necessary to see it a second time. Perhaps the most impressive scenes, besides the culminating one, were the parting at Bethany, the Repentance of St. Peter, the remorse of Judas.

The first part of the Play is over at twelve, when there is an adjournment of two hours. The second part terminates shortly before 6 p.m.

We made Switzerland our highway back to England, stopping a few days at various charming spots. (N.B.—What spot in Switzerland is not charming?)

*En route* we spent a day in Munich. Since our last International Congress of Nurses I have become imbued with the spirit of internationalism—the Editor will say that is the *raison d'être* of such Congresses. Well, this excellent spirit within me impelled me to ring the bell at the main entrance of the large General Hospital of that city, and boldly ask to be shown over.

When I explained that I was myself a *Krankenpflegerinnen*—the word looks brimming over with the highest qualifications, does it not?—I was at once admitted, and a gracious Sister of Mercy, although obviously the hour was rather inconvenient, took me round. The building—capacity about 500 beds—was built in the year 1813; structurally, therefore, it is out of date, as indeed all old hospitals must be, seeing that light and air as curative agents were "nothing accounted of" in the "good old *insanitary* days"—the italics, of course, are my own. For instance, the oblong ward, which appeared to be uniform in size, and contained fourteen beds each, had only one window, and that was placed at the one end! Consequently there could be no ventilation, and the patients looked weary and depressed. Not a single picture adorned the whitewashed walls, not a single flower

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