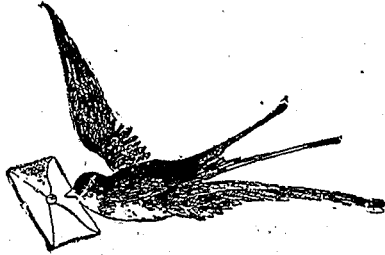


Our Foreign Letter.

A LETTER FROM THE COLONIES.
THE JUMPING-OFF POINT.



it, having only been ill twice myself. I will tell you about those illnesses—it will be of use to you, as you will learn from my experiences what *not* to do.

The first time was when I had the "flu." There are few things that can make you feel so like a bankrupt worm as the flu. I was with friends, and they said a fever should be starved. I don't know about the fever, but I do know I was starved. It took me months of stoking to get my weight up to its proper standard again.

Once I was sick in a boarding-house. Don't you ever do that—seek out some remote place and die. The equanimity of a boarding-house keeper will just hold out with healthy boarders, but one sick one will break down that calm reserve, prostrate her nervous energy, and altogether make a devil of a mess of everything.

The first day it was all right. Nobody knew I was sick until 5 p.m., when the slipshod chambermaid came to make the beds. (On Sundays, when a man would like to stay in bed an hour or two longer than usual, they rout round at 7 a.m.) She promptly bore the evil news to the landlady, and that fair dame came waddling into the room, exuding an odour of stale cabbage and fish inseparable from her class of woman.

She insisted on my seeing a doctor, and wanted to know why I had not told her a week before. She told me of a man who was taken ill in No. 4, just like me, and described his sickness and gradual decline into an early grave—all because he would not mention the fact that he was feeling seedy to this estimable lady.

I apologised with deep humility, and told her I did not know myself a week before that I was booked for this affliction. It had come as it were like a thief in the night, sought out my weak places, and smitten me therein. The lady merely sniffed (why do all landladies sniff?) and asked me what I would like to eat. As I did not want to eat I told her that a cup of tea was all my soul desired. Of course this was wrong; she insisted on my having a good meal, and said she would send me something up, hoping that I would eat it and try to get well, and so on, *ad. lib.* I meekly acquiesced, and waited the arrival of the tea.

The tea was brought by the chambermaid aforesaid, who put the tray on a chair beside my bed, and told me to hustle along and get through with it, as she was not going to wait all night for me, nor nobody else; she was too much put on as it

DEAR SISTER.

So you are thinking of joining the noble army of poultice-slingers. Well, I wish you luck. I don't know much about

was without having to wait on every man who thought he was sick, and so on and so on. I waited until her back was turned, and then fired the stuff out of the window, and so got rid of her for the night.

I lay all the night, and counted the hours and quarters as they were chimed by a clock near by. In the morning the doctor came, and said I had _____; I can't spell the word, but it was some sort of cholera, caused by drinking bad water. (I always do come to grief if I drink water.) The landlady held up her fat and dirty hands in horror, and hoped it would be a lesson to me. I hoped so, too. The medico sent found a bottle of physic, and I took one dose. That was quite enough. I felt that one dose of that stuff would cure me, and if it didn't, well, I would sooner have the cholera. A sick man with this peculiar complaint is, I admit, a nuisance in any house; but a man taking that vile stuff would soon become obnoxious, so I refused to take any more. Physic is not much good any way, and a man is in a bad way who leans too heavily upon it.

The next day my head was swelled. I felt swollen all over. It was a comfort to be in bed, for if I had wanted to go out an umbrella would have been the only article I could have worn. I was feeling sick, and very sorry for myself. The bed was hard, the room hot and stuffy; ten thousand odours from the kitchen assailed my olfactory nerves. I fancied I could trace each one back to its particular saucepan or sink. They were all vile, and only differed in that some were more vile than others. Outside, above all the noise of the traffic, could be heard the hideous complaining of a hurdy-gurdy. Who makes these things? Where do they come from, and are there any new ones? I never saw a new one. All that I have seen are apparently about five hundred years old, and very badly worn at that. They are all gone on the top notes, and a bit gaspy on the lower ones. In health one can hear them and live, but in sickness—a funeral dirge would be cheerful in comparison.

Of course, the landlady came to see how I progressed, and stayed awhile to cheer me up. She brought a few flowers, too, to brighten the room. She said they would not be wasted in any case, because she could work them into a wreath or cross if anything happened. I smiled as I thought of those derelict fragments of a rosebush worked into a wreath and roosting on my bosom.

She also asked me for the address of any friends I might chance to possess, in case it would be necessary to tell them that I had left this vale of woe. In the course of her cheerful conversation she regretted that I was in that particular room; one of the rooms downstairs would have been so much handier in every way. The last coffin that went down those stairs spoilt quite a lot of paint. I seemed to feel a sort of resentment against her continual harping on the subject of funerals, and was glad when she left me.

I passed a week in that room, and came out a wreck. I had gone to bed a man—wary, it is true, but still I had the outward semblance of a man. I rose—and Heaven help me! I was a ghost. But I had learned much. Long interviews with the

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