

OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

FAR FROM THE EMERALD ISLE.

Born in the early fifties, in a County Carlow town of no great importance, I early developed a restless disposition and used to assert, "Why! one might as well be a sheep or a cow as go on living in the country; one eats, one walks, the same every day." The scenery no doubt beautiful, trees, and gardens, and river, the woods, the flowers never to be forgotten, the old farm-houses with the kindest of people always ready to offer their warm hospitality, how often have I enjoyed great chunks of soda bread, with a plentiful supply of fresh butter, and a jug full of the sweetest milk; though a quarter of a century has passed since I dwelt amongst them I still vividly remember and love the old places. No doubt, changed little, except that the young men and women, known to me, have grown old and the old have passed away. Then the horses I loved, the beautiful brown "Shah" who could jump better than any horse I ever knew, the Chestnut always eager to get before every other horse, both reared from foals and trained by ourselves. The long solitary rides over the country roads—snow covered often in winter—with the leafless trees sighing in the wind engendering melancholy thoughts or through the soft spring rains with hawthorn budding and fresh green everywhere, the loveliest green in the whole wide world, the summer rides through shady lanes flicking the flies from about the horse's ears with a branch pulled from a beech or chestnut—the Autumn canters through the fallen leaves that rustled. In all my wanderings never have I lived in more beautiful natural surroundings; poor Ireland!

"My father loved you tenderly,
He lies within your breast,
But I, who would have died for you,
May never so be blest."

Yes, it was all beautiful beyond description; but, I longed to get away and sought excuses; looked around for means and finally found I could get to London, train in nursing, and the whole world was before me.

In London I applied myself most strenuously to my training for the necessary term and found little time for "seeing the world." Still the new surroundings gave interest to life, the theatres, the churches, the people so different from the simple country folk. I was sadly disappointed at the oratory I heard, the want of eloquence seemed phenomenal at various public meetings or lectures, even in the House of Commons, where I sometimes went to the Ladies' Gallery, but worst of all from the pulpits of churches of all denominations; perhaps it was the difference of manner between English and Irish, anyway, the Irish speakers and preachers, heard in London, were certainly the most popular. Portsmouth was my next place of residence—a congerie of towns, Landport, Southsea, Portsea, but Portsmouth proper was the part

I loved best, filled with sailors of all ranks, I, as a superintendent of nurses for the poor, got to know all ranks from Admirals to Stokers, in the mornings inspecting in the slums, the afternoons and evenings, often at the Commander-in-Chief's, where I met people whose doings were chronicled in the Press all over the world—and what did I find—that all men are alike—rich or poor, educated or uneducated, their natural minds were much the same, their characters of similar varieties, "The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins."

Altogether five years were spent in England with occasional short visits to my old home and then joy! An offer from India to come and work there, the charge of a new hospital in Bombay—the voyage by P. and O. through summer seas, short stops at Gibraltar, Malta, etc., the charming courtesy of every Anglo-Indian on board to the poor "Griffin" making a first voyage to the East.

Bombay is a city of vivid colour and splendid buildings. The Parsee women and Mahomedan men dressed in every imaginable tint in satin or silk with rich gold and other embroideries. The native fishermen and other labourers all but nude, their scanty pieces of white cotton clothing, in marked contrast to their brown skins, their manners so different to anything I had ever seen before, the low "salaam" with forehead almost touching the ground, their curious customs, many servants having to be employed, the cook, the washerman, the scavenger, all keeping to their own special role—even the dog boy will do nothing but lead about your dog, bathe him, or feed him; each horse must have his own groom, for one such servant will not attend two horses. Arriving as I did in the middle of the hot season I found the necessity of wearing the lightest of clothing, of leaving all doors and windows open night and day, of staying indoors between 10 a.m., and 4 p.m., or, if not, wearing a special sun hat, umbrella and dark glasses to protect one from the heat and glare of the sun.

With my Western energy I undertook more arduous work than I should and soon felt worn out and desirous of returning to a cooler climate, resigning my appointment I tried lighter duties up country, where I had country air and freedom with many horses for riding lent me by friends, my health and energy returning and being offered an important Government post in Madras I left the wilds of Kathiwar for city life again, my appointment being the most important in hospital work for a woman in all India.

In Madras I found much that was congenial and pleasant, the climate is supposed to be bad, nearly all European women and children go to the Hills or Home for the hot season, but living as I did in quarters at the top storey of a high building with large rooms and deep verandahs with flat roofs to sit on in the evenings and nothing between me and the sea breezes I found life endurable.

The genial Irishman Lord Connemara being Governor with Sir Henry Stokes and other country-

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