

OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

SOME NOTES FROM A NURSE'S DIARY IN PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN.

Eggs and bacon and a faithful old servant started three friends nobly on their journey to the island of Mallorca; in England, the same island is known as Majorca. A good luncheon on board the Dieppe boat put them into sweet humour—which, alas! was not displayed on the Paris train—for dinner was not to be had, and the train-attendant looked thoroughly disgusted at them; notwithstanding that, he sent a waiter at the Gare de St. Lazare, Paris, with an offer of baskets, at 4 francs each. The baskets turned out to be cardboard boxes, containing an excellent dinner—consisting of wine, mineral waters, chicken &c. They slept at a very comfortable hotel in Paris, and started at 9.15 a.m. from the Gare du Nord, for Marseilles. They did not arrive at their destination until 10.35 p.m.; there all worry regarding their luggage, &c., was made very easy, by arrangements having been made with Cook's agency in England, for one of their special men to meet them and see them off next morning by the Marseilles to Palma boat at 8 a.m.—all of which was accomplished for the small fee of 5s. to Cook's. When on board the boat they were doubly thankful they had a guide, as they had obtained return tickets to England, which it seems is a most unusual thing in Spain—in fact, such a thing as a return ticket is not available at all. After leaving the beautiful harbour of Marseilles, the sea being terribly rough, they retired to their cabins; and here, for the benefit of fellow-travellers, let me mention that they had all taken doses of Mothersill, and so they were, as it turned out, all fortified efficiently against that horrible malady—sea-sickness. With what joy did they wake up on the fourth morning of their journey to see through their port-holes the beautiful sand-coloured rocks of this beautiful and charming island. At 7 a.m., they saw the old castle of Belver; in the distance Palma, the capital of Mallorca; and the beautiful old cathedral. Friends met them on landing, and after passing through the Customs House without any trouble, they were taken to a restaurant for café and ensaimadas—a national breakfast bun—which the natives say it is impossible to make out of this island. After their refreshment they were taken to the open-air market—the most picturesque man ever saw. Here were to be seen strange fruit and vegetables for sale—such as sweet peppers, hot peppers, sweet potatoes, snails, eggs, meat, sausages, grapes, persimmon, green figs, pomegranates, haricot beans, peas, fearful-looking mushrooms, oubergines, an egg-shaped purple gourd (which is cut into thin slices and fried and very often sweet potatoes are served with them)—the latter remind one very much of cooked chestnuts. A very favourite liqueur here is Anis; it tastes very much like Kümmel flavoured with aniseed. A national dish, which is very good, is

called "Soppa"; it consists of brown bread, good stock and plenty of vegetables—garlic, of course, being included. Our house is a bungalow, built by an Englishman, situated a mile from the village of Coll-den-Rebasa, which is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Palma. There is no such thing as an official postman in Spain; and if you have your letters addressed to your house, you have to depend on a man whom people call a postman—and if he meets anyone who he thinks may be near you he just passes your letters on to be given to you when he sees you. It seemed a very unsafe proceeding, so our letters are addressed to the Post Restante, and they are fetched whenever anyone happens to be in Palma. The fish here is most peculiar-looking, and the only fish at all like those in England were hake, trout, and denton. Octopus is eaten here with rice and garlic, and caught with a sort of spear on a long stick. All the Spanish ladies wear black dresses and black lace mantillas; scarcely any hats are to be seen. The older peasant women wear little fancy shawls, something like old Paisley shawls, and little black kerchiefs on their heads; the younger peasant women wear very becoming white spotted muslin caps, gathered under their long plaits and then brought forward and fastened under the chin. In gala costume they have gold or ornamental buttons on the elbows of their sleeves, and their little shawls are always fastened with three pins. There are few machinery factories here, as labour is very cheap and living simple. Butter is scarcely ever eaten, being 2s. 6d. a lb.; and large loaves of brown bread, 10d.; on the other hand, fish, fruit and vegetables are cheap. Rents are low, too, and there are no rates or taxes—the money for state purposes being obtained through lotteries and licences for shopkeepers. Every man who puts up a name or sign must pay a licence—no matter what he means to sell; on the other hand, nothing is charged if a man likes to sell without advertising this fact. Smuggling here is very rife, and the coastguardsmen aid and abet; and it is, I believe, a common custom for contraband cigarettes and tobacco to be taken into Palma under a good load of seaweed. I understand that the contraband cigarettes are far superior to those allowed to be sold by the Government. Here the country is far more tolerant and sensible towards alcoholic beverages. England taxes beer so highly that one cannot get pure beer; here the most delicious red or white wine can be purchased for a very small sum. Here they recognise that local industries should be encouraged, not hampered as they are in England, where the duties on beer often and generally exceed the profits paid to shareholders. Should these few notes prove of any interest to your readers, it may encourage the author to send other notes describing a visit to Manacor, Inca, Soller and Algiers.

JANE FAWCETT.

It sounds delightful to live in a country where there are no rates or taxes, but presumably they are paid indirectly on the articles sold in licensed shops.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)