

## OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

## A VISIT TO CRACOW (OLD CAPITAL OF KINGDOM OF POLAND AND CAPITAL OF AUSTRIAN POLAND).

BY MISS JENTIE PATERSON.

*(Concluded from page 44.)*

Our return journey was interesting and bordered on the melodramatic. We were travelling by an "Express," and at the end had left ourselves rather short of time, so short that after discussion with the booking clerk on the advisability of travelling 1st or 2nd class—as the former necessitated a change at the border of old Russian Poland—I hastily glanced at the tickets, and seeing a "2" thought they were all right, and ran for the train, little thinking there was another town on the same line with a similar name to Zawiercie! The train was packed; it had come from Lemberg. A regiment of infantry flung itself in the only 2nd class coach I could see. We had to get in, as we were on duty at 6.30 next morning, so I caught hold of an officer and impressed him with our importance. The soldiers fell back, we gained the already overcrowded corridor of the coach, and gradually edged forward till I spied an almost empty compartment, in which an irate Courier was remonstrating with passengers who had gained access through the window. During the discussion, oblivious of the notice in French reserving the compartment for the Courier, we two sisters planted ourselves in the nearest corner! This added fresh fuel to the Courier's ire, and the other men sided with him—certainly if they could not remain we should not. So they vollied at us in all languages, and proved to me the folly of our old proverb "that woman has the gift of the 'gab.'" I expostulated in German "that women could not stand in a crowded corridor while one man, even if he were an Emperor, occupied a whole carriage." For obvious reasons I was temporally bereft of all comprehension of the French language—the fun was fast and furious, and at one time I thought I would be lifted bodily and flung on the heads of the passengers in the corridor—who watched the conflict with interest. The courier's hair was on end, he danced about like a marionette, one minute throwing himself half out of the window, while he called wildly for station master or guard, the next returning to his wordy assault. My companion's part was blank astonishment, coupled with ignorance of *all* languages except English; we sat tight, dreading every minute that our Kahki-clad medical officer would interfere and draw the storm on himself; in which case I foresaw we might require to retreat to save the uniform from insult, because technically we were in the wrong. At last seeing our determination, a soldier edged his tired wife on to the seat opposite us, then a sister of mercy got in, and so the carriage filled up while the courier, red-eyed and breathless,

subsided into the far corner and finished his journey at the next station. We next turned our attention to the tickets, and decided I had paid all the way, but received tickets for a village two short of our destination. We hoped the tickets might be examined before we got there and save explanation on the train, as we felt we could make it all right at Zawiercie where we were known to the station officials. But our luck was out! Just as we drew out of that station, the ticket collector appeared; we explained, and he muttered about reporting it when we arrived, so we felt all was well; but *arrived* at Zawiercie things assumed a different character! The train collector notified we had travelled beyond station marked on our tickets, and the station master was on the alert—as we discovered afterwards he would require to have refunded the money.—A fellow traveller came to our aid, and I stated my case through him in German to the Polish officials; as it was 2 a.m., I said we would return in the morning if any further trouble, and we went off apparently leaving them satisfied. Presently we heard panting behind us, and there was a porter tearing after us followed by the ticket clerk, a rotund gentleman in olive green, followed in turn by the station master, an attenuated human with red braided cap and military uniform. Tableau vivant! Stolid Great Britain again faced the volcanic temperament—the joke being we had not told the doctor about the mistake in the tickets, and he having secured a seat well forward in the train had his ticket checked in blissful ignorance before the fatal station! To cut a long story short and save a man's reason—the station master by this time made a good second to the courier—I suggested giving him 10 marks to pay the difference between the two stations and which we would recover when the mistake was cleared. No! he shrieked he wished the fare from Cracow over again! This being beyond reason we acceded to his request to return to the station and make our declaration before the police. While they wrote out the deposition I got our German-speaking friend to ask the booking clerk casually the fare from Cracow; to my surprise he named a sum much less than I had paid. After further examination of passport, I again showed them our special papers from the Public Health Ministry in Warsaw and immediately the police stopped writing, and the station master who had waved the papers aside before, begged us, cap in hand, to go and think no more of it; but it was late, we had been unnecessarily kept out of bed, so I said no! and much to their surprise and annoyance, counter-claimed for excess fare charged. At this moment we were startled by a loud chuckle, and looking round we saw an old engine driver in fits of laughter; "Go on Fräulein he cried, have your own back, they should never have put you to all this inconvenience! I kept up the farce and made them sign the counter-claim. Finally we got home and to bed, much amused at the ending to an enjoyable and remarkably cheap holiday!

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