

LETTERS FROM LIFE.—No. 2.

Graithwaite.

MY DEAREST PHYLLIS,—I was so glad to get your letter, and hear of your safe arrival at the Hospital. I fear your little illusions, as to everything being better and holier in a Hospital than anywhere else, have already faded away, and that you will find nearly as much human nature there as exists everywhere else. But I know you too well, my bairn, to think for a moment that you will despair; or that, having put your hand to the work, you will draw back again, or dream of giving up. If everything is not so lofty and so pure in Hospital life as you fancied it, be it yours to try and make it so, and so help to realise your own ideal. I see you will find very much to try your temper, and much more that will offend your sense of truth and justice; but make your letters to me your safety-valve, and do not wear your heart upon your sleeve, for daws to peck at.

And now to redeem my promise to keep you *au courant* with the news of our little circle, and of the bigger world beyond it. The men came home dripping and dissatisfied on the First. It was simply one dreary drizzle the whole day, and the whole six of them only brought home forty brace. However, we have heard since that things were quite as bad at Inverary, and in Yorkshire, so we are hoping for decent harvest weather and better bags, some day.

I had a letter of nearly two pages and a-half from Homburg. Father feels stronger already, and says he is "doing the cure—or rather it is doing him." He says the Prince of Wales has just left, and that he seems better, but still does not look at all well. The wonder to me is that H.R.H. is ever well at all, considering the immense amount of hard labour he has to go through. I believe the Prince is going to join the Princess and the Duchess of Fife at the family gathering in Denmark, which one would imagine cannot be one of unalloyed enjoyment, as the Czar is to be there, and I am told the precautions against Nihilistic plots this year are more stringent than ever. Charlie Hansard, who came yesterday straight from Moscow, says that we have no idea in England of the growing terrorism in Russia, and of the grinding *surveillance* under which every one lives, because no one knows from moment to moment whether he may not be suddenly denounced as a member of a secret society, and imprisoned for weeks, or even months, without a trial. He says there is far more seething discontent amongst the peasantry and in the army than the papers tell us. He seems wonderfully sobered down by his Russian experiences, and a good deal of his old

careless *nonchalance*, about everything but sport, has disappeared. "I went out to look for big game in the Caucasus," he says, "and I found an earthquake brewing." He is sure there will be a dreadful famine in Russia this winter, and thinks that it will lead to local riots, and that, if these become at all general, one of two things will happen—either a revolution *a la Francaise*, but on quadruple the scale; or else, perhaps, a war outside, to keep the people quiet at home. I don't think he is an alarmist, so Europe may be on the verge of more troubles than is generally imagined.

The civil war in Chili seems to be finished. The insurgents have captured both Valparaiso and Santiago, and completely defeated the Government forces. As usual, in South American fights, popular sympathy seems to have been entirely with the rebels. President Balmaceda has been reported killed; but Colonel Chalker—of whom more anon—says it is quite likely this is a *canard*, and that he has escaped through the Andes. If so, I presume he will in a short time turn up in London, and take a furnished house in South Kensington until the next revolution is ready, and he is wanted in his turn to upset his present successor. His pickings, however, will clearly not be as good as they are in such cases, because one of his friends was caught, while attempting to leave the country, with notes to the amount of a quarter-of-a-million pounds in his carpet-bag. The curious thing to my mind is, that the English nation continues cheerfully to lend millions upon millions to South American States, whose constitutions are rather less stable than water, seeing that each successive Government is usually founded on the fiery ashes of its predecessor.

We have such a character here—Colonel Joshua P. Chalker. Charlie brought him over, as they struck up a friendship in Russia, and he wants to show him a little English home-life. He is about middle height—rather all shoulders, don't you know—very thin, very sallow, nose long, eyes quick and grey, mouth and ears large, and a little short beard. He is exceedingly dry, and drawls distractingly. He is, however, very kind and nice, and Charlie says he is "true grit." But he does tell the most tremendous tarradiddles. Yesterday, at breakfast, he narrated quite gravely the incidents of a day's shooting on some American lake. He impressed upon us that he was all alone, but that he commenced at sunrise and went on until past sunset, and that in that time he brought down fourteen hundred and ninety-nine wild duck, besides various other unconsidered trifles in the way of feathered fowl. You know how touchy Sir Harry always is about big bags, and he said, snappily, "Why don't you say fifteen

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