INTRODUCTION.

VERY PERSONAL.

THE kindness shown to my "Inner Life of Syria" makes me long to presume on another narrative; but I picture to myself the following conversation with my publisher:—

"No really, Mrs. Burton, I cannot undertake your book, because we all know everything about India; we have sucked it dry, and are sick of it."

"True, Mr. A.," I reply, "but you said the same of 'Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land,' and yet I found enough of unwritten matter to give you MSS. which you had to cut down to two big vols. Perhaps, with my 'griffin' eyes, ears, and brain, I may have seen something from a different aspect to those who have preceded me for the last few hundred years. Do try me, dear Mr. A.! Give me another chance!"

Mr. A. relents, and accepts my MSS. Then the printers have to be conciliated. They always strike work when MSS. from Captain Burton or myself go in, we write so badly. Also I have to think of my readers, who are ever kind, generous, and just; and will not, I trust, be disgusted with a somewhat hackneyed title. For my part, I hope that between London and Goa we may chance to find something which is not generally known.

I always think of a *prima donna* at Trieste, with regard to the public. We import our operas from Milan two years before they appear in London. We have an excellent Opera house and three theatres, always full, and the Triestines are so severe and so critical that *artistes* become extremely nervous; they know if they can pass Trieste they may sing anywhere. One

evening, a very plain, but first rate, *prima donna* appeared on the stage. She had not yet opened her mouth; they all began to hiss and hoot. She advanced with great resolution to the footlights, and said: "*Cari Triestini*, I know I am frightful, but I did not come to be looked at, I came to sing. Hear me before you hiss." There was a dead silence. She opened her mouth, and before she had finished the first few bars, the applause was deafening and prolonged. She remained a favourite ever after.

Our English public is colder perhaps, but just, and generous, and sincere.

CHAPTER I.

FROM LONDON THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY.

AFTER a delightful year in England, publishing my last book, in the gay season of 1875, and being *fêtéd* by all my friends and relations enough to spoil me for ever, my husband, finding he had still six months' leave, asked me what I should like to do. I consulted my heart, and it answered, "India." He had been nineteen years in the Bombay Army, and eight of them on active service through all those exciting years from '42 to '49, on the staff of Sir Charles Napier, whose fortunes as a soldier he may be said to have followed. Indeed, the old General's fate seems to have overshadowed him, and later on, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe had a like effect in the political line, of whose school, and whose fervent disciple in Eastern affairs, he was. Do not start. This book is *not* going to be "weighted with a grievance." This only serves to explain that I had never seen India, and that I proposed that he should take me there and show me all his old quarters. He liked the idea; so we got a map, cut India down the middle lengthways, from Cashmere to Cape Comorin, and planned out how much we could manage to see on the western side, leaving the eastern for another year; we were already too far advanced in the season for such an expedition.

The 4th December, 1875, was remarkable for being as black as midnight during the livelong day: thick snow lay upon the ground and covered every object; dense, murky fog filled the air, through which a dull red, lurid gleam just rendered the darkness visible—and horrible. In any sunny land we should have feared an earthquake, or the last judgment, but here

(London) we only remarked that there must be something extra "odd" about the elements, with a passing smile at the unhappy foreigner who had come over to see London. Our dear "village" gloomed like a snow Inferno fit for Dante and Gustave Doré, and the "Squares" appeared like spectre Christmas Trees. "It looks," said my husband, "as if London were in mourning for some great national crime;" but I answered, "Let us try to think our Vaterland wears mourning for our departure into exile."

Everyone that day seemed ill and miserable; I felt as if I could never rise to face the day. To be sure we had been having a farewell dinner, which festivity devoted to leave-takings had been unduly prolonged to five o'clock a.m., and we were obliged to force ourselves to get up at nine, and put our shoulders to the wheel for our sins. We lunched with my father and family by lamp-light at one in the day, and set out, a large family party, by the 4.45 train to Folkestone; arriving cold and hungry, but merry, we enjoyed a delightful supper at one of the best hotels in the world, albeit somewhat expensive, and that is The Pavilion,—the redeeming point of Folkestone, for poor is the station through which so much wealth passes. There we found Carlo Pellegrini, of Ape celebrity, full of fun, who joined our family party. He was staying there some months for painting.

The next day, Sunday, the snow was eight feet deep, and we went with difficulty to the small pretty church, where the priest gave us a short, but sensible, sermon, in consideration of our pinched fingers and toes. All that day neighbouring friends and relations flocked over to spend the day with us; and one act I shall never forget, and that was my cousin's wife, daily expecting her confinement, wading four miles in the snow not to miss wishing us God-speed, because no carriage could be got to undertake the journey. Heart and pluck like that are not to be found out of the British Isles. Meanwhile the train stuck in the snow; the down train from Folkestone to Dover, usually an affair of twenty minutes, occupied from six till one p.m.—seven hours. The night train could not come in at all. The boat did not go, and it was "blowing great guns."

That night—the 5th of December—I bade adieu to all my friends and relatives, and one parting in particular still wrings my

heart. I little thought to meet no more Rodolph Arundell, the last of four dear beautiful brothers, who have all died young by untoward accidents. The wrench costs me a feverish attack every time I leave, which is once in every three or four years; nor do age and experience steel the heart nor wither the ever green memory. On Tuesday, the 7th, my husband and I found ourselves in a sleigh, which took us over the snow from hotel to boat. The weather seemed to stay its fury for our crossing the Channel, or else we are so used to rough it that it seemed only a healthy breeze and a heavy swell. The sun once tried to peep from his couch of clouds, and one passenger gleefully pointed out to another passenger a square inch or two of pale blue sky, which of course was duly smiled at by us tropicals. How hard it is to leave home! I even linger over it on paper; but now I am across Channel, and the deed is done, I will brace myself up and not be so tedious.

In our company for a week was that remarkably clever and brilliant writer, Andrew Wilson, the author of "The Abode of Snow." The old port of Boulogne stretched out its two long lean arms to our cockle-shell of a steamer. We enter somewhat differently to the manner of the old time. There was a new regulation, which is an extreme disadvantage to the town,—that of landing on the *gare* side, to the right. So that instead of remaining a few days in the town, as in the old time, it is easier to jump into the train and find oneself at Paris—*tant pis pour Boulogne!* The fact is that the Railway, perhaps the *most* despotic power of our modern day, willed it so. The Municipality, foreseeing that their City would, to the great detriment of the hotel-keepers, become a mere station, a place of passage, a "half-way house" between London and Paris, fought manfully against the change. The Railway simply said, "Either *here* or *nowhere*," and the Municipality was forced to yield.

Hôtel Christol is a grand place in Boulogne, but after The Pavilion it looked more than *mesquin*. Long, long ago, I passed two years of my school days in this town. My husband was then a young lieutenant on furlough from India. He was just beginning to spring into fame, after twelve years' service and

his famous expedition with the Hajj to Mecca, and was staying with his family and writing a book. It was, therefore, interesting for us to stop a few days and visit all our old haunts, where we first met when we were young. The Church of St. Nicholas; Constantin, the fencing master, where "the Burton *une-deux*" is still taught, and which afterwards earned him his *brevet de pointe*. The present Cathedral, in the Haute Ville, was building: now, a magnificent, but slightly crooked and very badly proportioned, pile. Dear old Abbé Haffreingue was its author. He died happy in 1871, after devoting half of his eighty-six years to its erection; and in gratitude to the English, who gave the greater part of the money, the statue of Our Lady, on the summit, has her face turned towards England.

Then the old ramparts where we first made acquaintance, and where he used to follow us when we were sent out to learn our lessons *al fresco*, and he used to chalk up, "May I speak to you?" and I used to chalk back, "No, mother will be angry"—and mother found it, and *was* angry. The Rue de l'Ecu, the Grande Rue, the Quai, the Pier, where we used to come on summer evenings and hear some Swiss strollers play on the guitar or fiddle, and sing little *jodelling* nothings, and thought it heavenly. How lovely everything is when one is young! And what a dear, picturesque old town it is, this capital of old Morinie,—the City of Julius Cæsar in ancient times, and of the Blessed Virgin in the present day, with its background of dull brown cliff, broken by the broad valley of the river Eln, Elna, Elnboga, now Liane! How many happy boating excursions we used to make upon that river when we were all young and living.

And then I hunted out my little brother's grave, and planted fresh rose trees. I visited Caroline, the Queen of the Poissardes, who used to be a friend of my childhood, a great ally of my brothers and sisters and self. She is still a beautiful and majestic creature in her costume. She reminded me of a promise I made her then, which I had long since forgotten, that if ever I went to Jerusalem I would bring her a rosary. I little dreamt then of marrying Richard Burton, who would be Consul of Damascus, and that I should ever go to Jerusalem; but things come about

strangely, and I *did* go there fifteen years later; and now, to her great delight, I was able to fulfil my promise.

I often wonder that nobody writes the history of the Poissardes of Boulogne. They are a race apart, — a fine cross between Flemish and Spanish. They are the original stock, and the townspeople are a new and mongrel breed whom these despise and do not mix or intermarry with. The Poissardes have their own church on their hill-top, and their own town, laws, customs, manners, and habits, a separate register of births, deaths, and marriages, and they live under the rule of Caroline. The lower class are the shrimping girls,—and a rough lot too, but remarkable for their virtue. If they chaff the funny passing Britisher a little too much, a reference to Caroline brings them to order at once. On great feast-days and religious processions they form by far the prettiest part of it, with their lovely varied costumes, big white caps, embroidered white kerchiefs, and the huge gold ornaments that are heirlooms. Boulogne is materially changed since our time. It used to be a very fast place, full of amusing, but not *all* desirable, acquaintances, although there was a large sprinkling of happy exceptions. In fact, it was a City of Refuge, "The home of the stranger who's done something wrong," and the *good* people came either for economy or for the education of their families.

On the 10th we went up to Paris. The Ligne du Nord is the only comfortable line of railway in France,—the only one which has porters and civil officials ready to give you the value of your "tip." We sped past the Dunes, loved of rabbits, where father used to shoot, *faute de mieux*, and I used to carry the bag and lunch; along the winding shore of ancient Picardy, through the peat beds leading to Abbeville, and over the utterly uninteresting plains of La Belle France, *i.e.*, the northern section, till we rushed by the black silhouettes which denote the fortifications of the Capital. We compared them with the workmen's Cities outlying our own Babylon, and we felt grateful to that "streak of silver sea," our Channel. May they who propose to tunnel under it never see their folly carried out. Much better is it to allow a few old women to be sea-sick for a couple of hours, than to waste

millions in constructing a thing at whose entrance we should always require a "Woolwich Infant." With our institutions, England placed in a continental position could not last a week. With our laws and customs, a foreign nation could not live a year. It is our birthright, a gift of God, that we are an island, and we want to sell it for the veriest mess of pottage,—a step which would be regretted but once and for ever as soon as it is irrevocable.

I found Paris terribly changed since the Franco-Prussian war. The weather was bad, for one thing, and that put one into an extra bad humour. Paris was full of Miss Blackford ("Fanny Lear") and her sale,—her black-draped drawing-room hung with Imperial likenesses, and her funny *meubles* engraved with her family motto "Prends tout."

The only amusement I found was going to hear Rossi in Hamlet and Macbeth. My husband and I had for some time past taken an interest in reading together and studying the various acting and difference of opinion as to the interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedies. The quarrels and excitement occasioned by Salvini's appearance in England, with his Italian reading of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello,* his magnificent voice and presence, and that of our own great tragedian Irving's appearance in these characters, with the latest, and perhaps truest, reading, gave the desired opportunity. It had become almost a party question amongst the dramatists, and we had entered warmly into it, visiting all these representations as often as we were at liberty; we were desirous of comparing these with Rossi, the only other great name at present in connection with Shakespeare in Europe, and so we went to "Les Italiens" every time he performed.

I found the scenery after London shabby to a degree, the dresses flashy and tinsel; there were no appliances for sensational effect. Rossi is a short man, with a bull throat, a chest suggestive more of fat than muscle, a big trunk upon incompetent legs, dark hands, a pale, unwholesome face, and light hair. He

* It may not be uninteresting to remark that Salvini read Shakespeare with our respected and talented predecessor, Charles Lever, at Trieste, who expounded the author's hidden meanings to him.

appeared to have colourless small eyes, and was obliged to shut them for passionate scenes. This on the stage; and as his pictures represent him as a fine, handsome, dark young man, I conclude it is the effect of the "make-up." In Hamlet he is too mad, and rants. He lacks the dignity, the finely-strung imagination and refinement and facial expression of Irving; nor has he the majesty and the glorious Tuscan Italian of Salvini, whose voice is like a Cathedral bell. And yet no Italian can help being artistic. Some of his actions are large, noble, and graceful, and he handles his sword like a man who lives with his weapon by his side. To say he cannot act would be absurd, but he can only rank as third. In Macbeth he was very good in the murder scene, from "Why have you left the chamber?" till "Wake Duncan with thy knocking." He has a pretty trick of looking at his blood-stained hands and hiding them, when he thought nobody was observing him; and again, when the Queen's death is announced, he looks sad for one instant only, and then, seizing what appears to me the true idea, that Macbeth would soon have poisoned her, to silence those somnambulisms and nightly tellings of his secret murders, gives himself a shake and casts his sadness off, as if he would have said, "Better so; what matters whether to-day or to-morrow?" Then, *en revanche*, he staggers like a drunken man to commit his murder, and in his conversation alone with his wife he treads upon his own cloak, and feigns to think it is the ghost of Banquo. Terrified by his guilty conscience, he flounders on his back like a turtle, his crown rolling away. Now, Shakespeare was an Englishman, and an Englishman rolling on his back from fright was never seen, nor could such an idea enter an English brain. Had he drawn his sword to cut the ghost down, it would have been more in tune with our ideas. His wife drags him off after the murder, pommelling him as a fish-wife would a drunken husband. The ghost scene, supper, and fright, were not merely a *fiasco*, but contemptible. In Hamlet, he danced upon his uncle's picture like a monkey. All that is neither English nor Shakespeare. I am a fanatic about Shakespeare, so I enter into these minor details *con amore*. The last story I heard in Paris concerning Rossi was a conversation between two *petits crévés*:—

A. As tu entendu Rossi?—

B. Qui est Rossi?—

A. Comment! tu ne sais pas? Mais ce monsieur qui fait une conference sur un crâne.

And now for a serious bit of moralizing, from gay to grave. The radical changes of the last five years in Paris deserve chronicling and deep study. The War and the Commune have made a New World. "*La nation la plus aimable la plus aimée et peut-être la moins aimante,*" has been translated—"The light and joyous character may lie below; but there is a terribly hard upper crust of sulkiness and economy run mad—rage for lucre, and lust *pour la revanche.*" There is only the *ancienne noblesse,* the Faubourg St. Germain, the souls loyal to their King and to their Faith, who remain pure. So far, the Parisians are like the Irish Kelt,—a blathering, bumptious, bull-and-blunder loving race. The former have been converted in half-a-century by politics and polemics into a moping and melancholy brood. It is no longer the fashion in France to speak without an introduction. Men will sit side by side at *table d'hôte* in dead silence for a month; they travel twenty-four hours in the railway without opening the mouth; and if a loud laugh be heard in public it is sure to come from some *triste Anglais.* Even the women, although they still fling the look of hate at a pretty toilette, seem to have abdicated the supremacy of the toilette. Once you never did, now you often see the absence of corsets upon figures that can't stand it. They are badly painted, and it is a sin to paint badly. They are *outrées* in their dress, and the neglect of these things is a bad sign in Paris. The middle and the lower classes, who used to be *à quatre epingles,* were *mal coiffées,* with their petticoats hanging below their dresses, as we were in the days of *les Anglaises pour rire.* We have learnt many things from our French friends, and amongst the *good* things, how to dress; but dress never made *our* women's beauty—it did that of the French.

The theatres are clearing 27,000,000 of francs (1875), when during the palmiest days of the Empire they never exceeded 17,000,000. Except at the new Opera, the scenery and decorations are those of our penny gaffs. "Les Italiens" bears the palm of