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1908

Erin Villa

Sunta

14th Sept^r / 08

My dear Pippa

I got a letter from you last mail, which is a sufficiently rare occurrence to call for special thanks. I'm surprised that you should jeer at the name of my house; it's useful really, as at balls & other functions when it's getting late & I want to go home, I only have to start whistling "Come back to Erin, ~~leavoureen~~ leavoureen", ~~and~~ in order to draw off the man-sahib.

The pigs of authorities have taken it into their heads to send the battalion

back to Raourl Pindi this cold weather. The men are still feeling the effects of the Tochi so much (every one almost without exception suffering from enlarged spleen) that it was seriously proposed to send us all home; however the Gov^t said they couldn't afford that, so they are sending us to Pindi instead, though what good that will do I can't imagine. The present arrangement is that we are to march all the way (seven weeks), leaving Kumballa about the 24th of next month; it will be horribly hot then, & I should think will kill a good many of the men. Personally, I am not going to march with them, as the Colonel has asked me if I would like to stop at Kumballa with about 200 of the men who are going home in November, & then proceed to Pindi by train, I

shall do this if I can't manage to stop on here for the winter, which is what I am trying for at present; there isn't any visible vacancy in a paid billet, but I am offering my services gratis, & hope to be engaged; I shall then be more likely to drop into anything that does fall vacant, & it will save the expense & worry of moving all our things to Pindi with the chance of having to move back again in a month or two.

We have been having a very busy time of it here with dissipations of various kinds - chiefly theatricals. After the White Elephant came the "Mahatma", a musical piece by two amateurs, in which Grace had a part & which I helped to stage-manage. Grace was an elderly spinster,

and was very amusing & sang very
nicely; she was much appreciated
& was really the success of the play.

Then we had "singing pictures" and a
small play at Barnes Court, the Lieut.
Governor's. Grace sang that old song
about "dubin twiddled his finger &
thumb", whilst people on the stage did
tableaux; the play was a small farce
by Howells, called "the Mousetrap", with
one man & 5 ladies in it, of whom I
was the man & Grace one of the ladies.
It is an amusing little thing, & went
rather well, although I personally
was indifferent I know. Now I
am rehearsing a part in a comedy
called the Home Secretary, to begin at
the Theatre on Friday next, and Grace
is in the "Mountebanks", by Gilbert
& Sullivan, to come off at the end of the
month. My part in the Home Secretary

is Mr Thorpe Didsbury; it is a very
 minuscule one, - only on for about
 20 minutes altogether - but it is good
 as far as it goes; Mr T.D. is a stupid
 tiresome old bore, & I'm sorry to say
 that I am going to do it as much
 à la Uncle William as I can! Aggy
 came in to a rehearsal the other day
 & was in fits of laughter at it - but
 I'm inclined to think that people who
 haven't seen the original will say that
 no such old gentleman could even have
 existed.

In the Mountebanks Grace has got the
 part of Nita the dancing girl, who
 sings the "put-a-prunny-in-the-slot"
 song; it is I think the best female part
 in the piece, & she will do it very well,
 but I doubt if the play as a whole
 will be very good, as the company is

an indifferent one, & they really haven't given themselves anything like enough time to work it up in.

We were very disappointed at Ralph not being able to come to us, but yesterday got a telegram from him saying he would turn up on Friday; unfortunately we had asked one of my subalterns to come & stop here for a few days, ^{about then,} so I'm afraid Ralph will have to get a room at a hotel for part of the time he is here.

Aggy & Charlie are to come to us about the 26th or so, till the beginning of October, when he goes back to Poona; she is going to stop on for a bit longer, which is a good thing, as Poona in October is very unpleasant, & she has only just begun to pick up a bit.

The rains are doing their best now to stop, but are not very successful as yet; it will be a great blessing when they finally disappear & we get warm dry weather again.

The Babington-Smith wedding comes off on the 22nd of this month; I don't know the lady, but every one says she is as dull as ditch water & very stupid. We have been bidden to the Church, which is a distinction in its way, as there is only room for about 250 people there.

Spearmen has suddenly taken it into his head to send in his papers & leave the service; he wrote & told us he was doing this, but has so far not given any explanation of his extraordinary conduct. I think

he will probably go & live in Italy, and sit on a marble seat of the Alma Tadema variety eating macaroni; at any rate that used to be the sort of life he hankered after.

Love to all the family - I had a sort of idea that I had ceased to be President of the Hatch by popular acclamation, but I may have been mistaken.

Your affect^{te} brother

Dick.