

Political and General Miscellany.

MRS. IDA PFEIFFER—LETTER FROM HUMBOLDT.

Mrs. Ida Pfeiffer, the celebrated lady traveller, who went twice round the world, is now again in London, on her way to Madagascar, into the interior of which she wishes to penetrate and explore. Her most recent travels extended over Germany, but she does not find in the civilized parts of the world the same interest as in the less cultivated regions. There, in the bosom of nature, undisturbed by the presence of man, she delights most.

On this her last visit to the European continent, some of the most distinguished men came forward, unsolicited, to do her honor. In Berlin and Amsterdam, the society of Natural History conferred upon her their respective diplomas, and elected her an honorary member. The King of Prussia graciously invited her to his residence at Potsdam, and presented her with the golden medal of the Humboldt order for arts and sciences. The greatest living naturalist and philosopher, Alexander von Humboldt, exhibited in her favor the warmest friendship and admiration. As a token of the affectionate interest he took in her welfare, he presented her, on parting, with an autograph letter of which the following is a literal translation:

"All those who, in different regions of the earth, preserve a remembrance of my name and affection for my works, I earnestly beg to receive, with friendly interest, and to aid with their counsels, the bearer of these lines, Mrs. Ida Pfeiffer, celebrated not only for the noble constancy that, amidst so many dangers and privations, led her twice round the globe, but, above all, for the amiable simplicity and modesty pervading her works, the truthfulness and philanthropy of her judgement, as well as the independence, and at the same time the delicacy of her sentiments. Enjoying the confidence and friendship of this respectable lady, I blame her for, though I cannot refrain from admiring, that indomitable energy of character which she displayed wherever called—I should say, impelled by an unconquerable passion of exploring nature and the habits of the various human races. As the oldest living traveller, I feel a desire to offer to Mrs. Ida Pfeiffer this slender proof of my high and respectful esteem.

ALEXANDER HUMBOLDT.

"Potsdam, City Castle, June 8, 1856."

Mrs. Ida Pfeiffer might justly be proud of so very flattering a testimony from one of the most eminent men living, but her modesty is equal to her good sense, tact, patience, perseverance, power of endurance and simple habits.

A special Providence seems to have watched over this extraordinary woman. She has been preserved amid untold dangers and perils of sea and land. That a delicate woman, unarmed, unknown and poor, with no prestige of aristocratic descent, without the magic of an ample exchequer, should twice have girded the world, unharmed and unscathed, and accomplish, unaided and single, what the most reckless man who scaled the bloody heights of the Alma might have shrunk from appaled, seems almost incredible.

Is this not an abundant testimony, then, that deadly weapons are absolutely unnecessary for protection? And may not nations learn from this fact, tested under every lon. and lat. of the earth, that if they were to confide in the protecting power of

Providence and not in gunpowder, there would be an end of maintaining standing armies, and men trained to the use of arms, which, perhaps, more than any other cause, provokes wars and bloody conflicts amongst mankind?

An irresistible impulse impels this wonderful lady to wander over God's vast and beautiful world, and to visit the great variety of the races of men. Not the least wonderful part of her adventures is the way in which she communicates with the various peoples, some of which she found in the least developed stage of nature. For she is assisted by an extraordinary power of expressing her wants and thoughts by mimicry—a kind of natural language of universal interpretation.

It might be imagined that, in order to perform such stupendous travels, Mrs. Ida Pfeiffer must be in possession of a large fortune, whereas her only pecuniary resources are vested in the produce of her literary works. When in this way a modest sum has accumulated in the hands of her publishers, she again sets out to visit some unexplored part of the world, to return when her means are exhausted.

Several editions of her works, translated into the English language, have found extensive public favor in England and America. Her last travel round the world, by far the most interesting of her literary productions, has been edited by Messrs. Orme and Longmans.

She is now waiting to meet with a suitable vessel to carry her to the Cape of Good Hope or to the Mauritius, and thence to Madagascar. May her wishes be fulfilled, and may the same good fortune which has hitherto accompanied her, follow her in her future travels, and in due time procure us again the pleasure of another of her very interesting and instructive descriptions of foreign countries and people.—*London Morning Star*.

From Maury's Geography of the Sea.

PHYSICAL FACTS AND INFERENCES.

GULF STREAM—It flows, a river in the ocean, with its banks well defined in appearance, and in the temperature of its waters. Its volume is said to be more than three thousand times greater than the Mississippi. It flows up hill rather than down; its lower surface at its commencement, being several thousand feet lower than in its northern sweep. A cold current runs by its side, or under it, from north to south; as is evidenced by the fact that icebergs make their way south, often in opposition to the Gulf Stream.

The Gulf Stream is roofed. This is shown by the falling away of boats from either side of the ridge to its banks or edges, and from the fact that nothing is ever known to float over the Gulf Stream from east to west, or vice versa.

It is "almost susceptible of mathematical demonstration, that to overcome the resistance opposed in consequence of its velocity, would require a force at least sufficient to drive at the rate of three miles an hour, ninety thousand millions of tons up an inclined plane, having an ascent of three inches to the mile."

The course of the Gulf Stream is not determined by the outline of the land along which it flows; but to some extent it determines that outline. The Gulf Stream is the great "weather breeder" of the Atlantic. Storms either commence in it or proceed directly to it, and follow its course for thousands of miles northward, till they are spent. These storms are of all degrees of force, from the gentlest May shower to the most terrific hurricane.