Our Medical Staff in India

BY EMILIA L. BRAUNS

“I was sick and ye visited me.”

“When saw we thee sick?”

“Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.”
In this year 1908, let us look back twenty-five years, and we shall see a young woman leaving her comfortable home and her loved family in Ardmore, Pa., and sailing for far-off India. Graduated from the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, and having served as assistant physician in the Norristown State Insane Asylum, ANNA S. KUGLER was well prepared to practice her profession in her own country. Why did she give up all her bright prospects and go to that new and untried field? Then, as now, her answer would be, "The love of Christ constraineth me." The Saviour's command, "Go," had come to her as a personal message, when she was quite a young girl, and her reply had been, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord." How did our Father first send her this message? It came through a returned missionary of another denomination, whose earnest words addressed to a
Lutheran Sunday School of which she was a member aroused in her heart the conviction that the call to take the Gospel to the heathen was intended for her.

When she offered herself as a missionary, the Foreign Board and Executive Committee were not yet ready to support a medical mission. This was a great disappointment to her, but, putting aside her own choice of work, she went to India, and labored faithfully in the schools and zenanas until the church at home was prepared to respond to the appeals of the missionaries on the field, to undertake medical work. During the two years in India, before receiving her appointment as medical missionary, Dr. Kugler was frequently called upon to relieve the sufferings of our own missionaries and of many natives, and to these calls she responded as far as her other duties permitted.

Soon after her appointment, a dispensary was opened in a small rented building, and here we see our first medical missionary happy in the opportunity to care for the sick bodies as well as the sin-sick souls of the people to whom she had devoted her life. How her heart rejoiced at this small beginning, and how she longed and prayed for the time when her hopes would be realized and a hospital would be built in Guntur!
Quietly and unassumingly she continued her work, and, ten years after her first arrival in India, she saw the completion of the Dispensary, the first of our medical buildings. To one of her friends she wrote: "It is the greatest comfort I have had in India. It is really a pleasure to have patients when one has a convenient place to see them in." In the same year, ground was broken for the Hospital, the formal opening of which took place four years later, and Dr. Kugler was appointed superintendent. The Jubilee Medical Home was finished and occupied, and other buildings connected with the Hospital have been erected.

Her work is a success. Her life is one of service. The Hospital motto, "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," is truly exemplified in her life. A minister of another denomination visiting our Hospital in Guntur, walking through the wards with Dr. Kugler and seeing the influence of her presence and her words upon the patients, writes: "I realized I was in the presence of a saint, a messenger of the living God."

The value of her work has also been recognized by the Indian Government, which bestowed upon her the Kaiser-I-Hind medal, a decoration given only for specially distinguished public service in India.
For the Hospital that was being built, a trained nurse was a necessity, and, in 1894, eleven years after Dr. Kugler went to India, **MISS KATHERINE FAHS**, who had been trained and graduated in the University Hospital, Philadelphia, was appointed by the Executive Committee for this office.

Miss Fahs, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor, spent her childhood in Pennsylvania and her girlhood in Ohio. In Canton, Ohio, she united with Trinity Lutheran Church, and for several years was a parochial worker under her pastor, Rev. J. H. Harpster, D.D., now missionary in Rajahmundry, India.

As the Hospital was not completed on her arrival in Guntur, Miss Fahs spent her first years in studying the language, assisting in the Dispensary, nursing the sick, especially the sick missionaries, and was for some months in a hospital in Bombay to acquaint herself with methods used in a place devoted almost entirely to natives, thus preparing herself for the position of head nurse in our own Hospital. Like Dr.
Kugler, she was not idle nor repining whilst waiting for her special work, but followed the Scripture injunction, "Whatsoever thy hand findetheth to do, do it with thy might."

As soon as opportunity offered, in 1899, the Training School for Nurses was organized by Miss Fahs. There were more applicants for admission than could be received, but some of those taken in as probationers, finding the work too hard or the discipline too severe, decided that nursing was not their vocation. Some, however, have persevered in taking the entire course of three years, and have done great credit to the superintendent. Dr. Kugler says: "Much credit is due Miss Fahs for the indefatigable zeal with which, in the midst of difficulties peculiar to work in the Orient, she organized and carried forward this department of the work. The only thing that would make it impossible for a nurse holding a certificate from our school to succeed, would be some inherent defect in herself. We have the advantage of having as superintendent a graduate of one of the best hospitals in America."

When on her furlough, 1902-1903, Miss Fahs took a post-graduate course in Philadelphia and New York. At this time she was called upon
to mourn the loss of her father, Rev. J. F. Fahs, but had the comfort of being able to minister to him in his last sickness.

During her absence from Guntur, her place in the Hospital was admirably filled by Miss Myra Smith, a graduate of the Training School. On her return to India, Miss Fahs resumed her work, warmly welcomed by her co-workers in the Hospital, who were “counting the months when Miss Fahs would return.” In addition to her arduous duties in the Hospital, the girls in the Orphanage are now under her care.

The second physician to go to our mission in India was DR. MARY BAER, who arrived in Guntur shortly before Christmas, 1895, twelve years after Dr. Kugler’s first arrival.

An address by Rev. J. W. Goodlin, which she heard when she was a child, was the means of interesting her in foreign missions, and her great longing was to become a missionary. Many apparently insurmountable difficulties were in the way, but gradually one after another was removed, and Mary Baer worked her way through school at her home, Canal
Dover, Ohio, and then through Wittenberg College, graduating with first honors. For a year she taught school, after which she entered the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia to prepare herself to go to India as medical missionary. After completing the course, she was honored by receiving appointment as assistant physician in the Woman's Hospital in Philadelphia, where she gained much experience useful to her in her future work.

As with all other missionaries, the first year or two in India, was devoted to the study of the language, a trial to the patience of all longing for active work. Even in these years of waiting, she was able to give assistance in the Dispensary and Hospital. As soon as she passed the language examination, she was placed in charge of the Dispensary, and, when Dr. Kugler was on furlough, Dr. Baer, in addition to her duties in the Dispensary, was acting superintendent of the Hospital. She proved most efficient in this capacity, but on her return Dr. Kugler resumed the position of senior physician and superintendent of the Hospital, Dr. Baer continuing in charge of the Dispensary. Added to this, she assisted in zenana and evangelistic work, and had the responsible work of caring for the famine orphans. Her great fondness for children made this indeed a labor of love.
After nearly nine years in India, seven of which she was in charge of the Dispensary, Dr. Baer came to the United States on a well-earned furlough. Dr. Kugler writes: “She ought to have left long before she did, but, because she knew what a burden the work was for one physician, she risked her own health by remaining until a new physician was in the field.” During the time Dr. Baer was on furlough, she took up special work in Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and in Dr. Howard Kelly’s Sanitarium, in the same city. By permission of the Executive Committee the Maryland Synodical Society had assumed her support, and, when on her furlough, many of the Maryland ladies learned to know her and to feel proud of their missionary.

The furlough ended, she returned with joy to her chosen work, reaching Guntur in December, just eleven years after her first arrival there. At once she resumed her work, and, when Dr. Kugler left Guntur in February, 1907, for a much-needed furlough, Dr. Baer again took charge of the Hospital.

One of the Synodical societies about to endow a bed in the Hospital wished to make it a memorial to Dr. Baer, but she wrote telling them she would have no monuments erected for her while she was living; after
she was dead she would not be able to prevent it, but should a tablet with her name on it be sent out to Guntur, it should not be put up. The modesty of Dr. Baer is only equaled by that of our other missionaries.

The growing work of the Hospital and Dispensary called for another medical missionary, and it was a joy to the church at home and to the missionaries in the field when **DR. ELSIE REED MITCHELL**, of Denver, Col., offered herself. Though living in Denver at the time of her appointment, she is a Philadelphian by birth, and it was at the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia that she began the study of medicine. Before finishing the course, she moved with her family to Colorado, and it was at the Medical School of the University of Colorado that she was graduated with high honors and was admitted as interne in the Arapahoe County Hospital in Denver, where she served with distinction. In her private practice, she was remarkably successful. She held important positions in the Medical School and
other institutions, and was on the editorial staff of the Woman's Medical Journal. That she was ready to set aside her brilliant prospects in this country in order to go to India as a missionary, can not be a matter of surprise, when we hear of the godly mother who prayed, "Make my Elsie a healer of souls as well as a healer of the body," and whose message to her daughter was, "Go, and be brave."

Dr. Mitchell arrived in Guntur a few months before Dr. Baer left on furlough, and, though her time was largely occupied with the study of the language, yet she could be of assistance to Dr. Kugler, and, when Dr. Kugler was absent from Guntur on a short visit to Madras, Dr. Mitchell was left in charge of the Hospital. Though frequently assisting in the Dispensary, she did not assume entire charge until she had been two years in Guntur. About the same time, a dispensary was opened in Chirala. This work was started by Dr. Kugler, and, after a few months, was assigned to Dr. Mitchell. Two nights in every week are spent in traveling to and from Chirala, in order to give a day to attend to the sick, but the fatigue is forgotten when the good results of the work are considered. In the same old building in Guntur which was rented for the first dispensary there is now held a weekly clinic for Mohammedan women and children, and this also is in charge of Dr. Mitchell.
One who knows writes: "Dr. Mitchell has been doing splendid and efficient work in India, and she is a missionary of whom we may be very proud."

The work of our medical missionaries is not only the healing of the bodies, but wonderful opportunities come to them to apply healing to the sin-sick souls, and many who came to the Hospital to have their physical sufferings removed have learned of the Great Physician who can cure both soul and body. Jesus Christ’s Hospital is the name given to it by the natives, and Jesus Christ’s Hospital it truly is.

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