FOLLOWING THE GREAT PHYSICIAN IN ASSAM
An ever-changing land

When I began to feel very ill and after an examination by one of our Baptist teachers, who has to be nurse and counselor as well in these far away lands, it was decided that I must leave at once for Gauhati. She had discovered that I had a temperature as well as white patches on my throat.

My bumpy, dusty ride to the station and the tiresome all night trip on the train were somewhat dim but unpleasant experiences, for I was having a high fever. In the morning we reached Gauhati and I was taken to the American Baptist Hospital for women and given the one European room. It was so quiet and peaceful after the hard trip. I was delighted with the two fine young women, Dr. Randall and Dr. Kinney, who were so competent, kind and thorough in their search for the cause of my illness. Miss Stever, the Superintendent of nurses, had trained the little Assamese girls into the most deft and delightful of nurses. My little day nurse, Lupbea, was so lovely—all in white, with her dark skin and shining eyes; and such a good nurse. She was, I believe, the granddaughter of a head hunter from the hills — now a real Christian.

I shall never forget the first night as I tossed on the bed, trying to sleep. I heard what was meant to be music just outside the Hospital Compound. There was a Hindu wedding being celebrated, and all night long came the noise of the native drums and the shrill singing of the paid musicians—on and on. I imagined the little bride, perhaps less than ten years old, married to a middle-aged man—her childhood, her home and her mother gone forever. She now was the slave of the mother-in-law and at the mercy of perhaps a brutal husband. Worn out, I fell asleep about four, and wakened at seven to hear, not the hideous music of the night, but the sound of the hymn, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me," sung by women's voices. It was a hymn my mother used to sing to me as a child. It was so different and so sweet that I found I was crying with relief and real happiness. Later I found that the night nurses, before they go off duty, meet with the incoming day nurses in the lobby of the hospital and there they have a little service each morning—two hymns, a prayer, a few verses from the Bible. Imagine what it must seem like to the Hindu and Mohammedan women in the wards to have, not only perfect and loving care, but this Christian influence.

One day Dr. Randall came into my room and opened a chest in the corner. It was full of neat piles of bandages, towels, gauze, etc., and it all had come from the Mission groups in this country who had been working for the White Cross. My own church had sent some material. Can you imagine my feelings?

I was quite ill for over two weeks but with skillful nursing and care I was able in three weeks to leave for Calcutta with my husband.

Never shall I regret my illness for it brought me into such close touch with the work of our doctors and nurses in other lands. It made me long that every Indian woman could know...
the peace and care that is so foreign to their land and thought so unnecessary for women, and that is found only in Christian institutions of which the Assam Hospital in Gauhati is a notable example.

MRS. EDGAR H. BETTS.
(In 1931-32 Mrs. Betts accompanied her husband on a tour of mission stations in the Orient with the Laymen's Commission. The tribute to the work of the medical staff was written after a stay of three weeks in the Woman's Hospital at Gauhati.)

A Letter from a Planter's Wife.

The following letter, written by the wife of a planter in South India, was appeared in the Planter's Journal, November, 1933.

"This is really not a letter from the wilds at all, as I am in Guwhati in the Mission Hospital, recuperating from the worst attack of malaria I have ever had. However, I am now at the convalescent stage and able to enjoy an invalid. And certainly there could not be a nicer place to be or nicer people than the American staff to cheer one's convalescence. And the little Indian nurses are so jolly and so willing to gratify the patient's every whim. All of them are trained to a high vantage point of efficiency, and one imagines that a tremendous amount of work and splendid organization must have been put into the task. To the patient who has often had to nurse herself, as most of us have at one time or another, it is very pleasant to be so very thoroughly taken care of. Perhaps the most remarkable thing that is too much trouble is partly due to the fact that the little nurses are all Christians. To the patient who has often faced woman of about sixty, and her name is Anondi (Joy). She is practically giving her service as the small and collectively. She is a very sweet and medically in the types of cases treated. The need is still appalling, and it will take years to dispel the ignorance and superstition which is rife. A baby of two was brought to us with the history that it had been sick for twenty-six days. When the illness began the baby had very high fever and was delirious in order to make the baby close its eyes and sleep, the native doctor advised them to put ginger juice into the eyes. The little one closed his eyes and not only opened them when they brought him to us more than three weeks later, He will never see again as the ginger juice proved to be such a severe irritant that the cornea was destroyed in both eyes.

Where the hospital had very little in the way of equipment in 1928, we were able to install electric lights and fans in 1929, to put in running water and so get our sterilizers working well in 1930, and in 1932 we were able to install sanitary equipment and separate sinks for the patients, thanks to a specific gift. All of these have improved the efficiency of the hospital tremendously. Whereas all of the beds were black iron in 1928, and were too heavy and cumbersome to use, we now have quite modern hospital beds (made in the country for the most part but very satisfactory) of angle iron, white enamelled.

The hospital was built as a result of the Jubilee Gift of the women of Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. The corner stone was laid in 1923 but the building was not finished until 1925. Then, when Dr. Esther Closson, who had been sent to the field, had to return to this country because of her health, it was not used, except as a missionary residence, until 1927. In July of 1927 the Board loaned Dr. Martha Gifford to Assam for a short period and she, working with Miss Marvin and Miss Stever, who already had started a training school for nurses, opened the hospital. In 1928 the average number of in-patients per day was 7. I arrived in November, 1928, and Dr. Randall came in November, 1929.

Until this year, the Gauhati Hospital has been the only hospital in the Province of Assam which admitted women in the hospital has been the only hospital in the province above the lowest grade and women and children has just been laid in Shillong. Because of the social conventions and religious beliefs no woman above the lowest classes would allow herself to be treated by a man. Hence, due to ignorance, filth and lack of proper medical attendance, the death rate for women and children was very high, and still is. The Province of Assam is roughly the size of the State of Michigan, and the population is about nine and a quarter millions. We have had patients from a distance of three hundred miles. There are other hospitals which admit women and to several of these, where the physician in charge is a woman, women go freely.

As to the staff, in addition to the American staff, Dr. Kinney, Dr. Randall, Miss Stever and Miss Marvin, there are two Assamese girls, Lahari Bhuyan and Alice Mark, who have had their medical training at Ludhiana, and are serving as assistant physicians. Suprabha Bhuyan, who received her nurse's training at Ludhiana, Kikasangla, Kathunua Kiron, and Leah Mottin, our own graduates, are serving as staff nurses.

At the present time there are about 20 girls in the School of Nursing, and of these, one is an Ungami Naga, one an Ao Naga, seven are Garoos, one Bengali, one Ahom, two Kacharis. During the past year the number of in-patients was 634 and the number of out-patients was 3,999. The daily average of in-patients was 29.

Patients are admitted regardless of whether they can pay or not, and wherever possible are expected to pay what they can even though it be just a few cents a day. Sometimes they furnish their own food and this helps. Patients occupying private and semi-private rooms pay set fees for the accommodations taken. I think that fully two-thirds of our children are treated free, or free aside from the fact that in some cases food is furnished by the parents.

We have one room fitted up to care for European and American patients. This room is a little Indian nurses are so jolly and so willing to gratify the patient's every whim. All of them are trained to a high vantage point of efficiency, and one imagines that a tremendous amount of work and splendid organization must have been put into the task. To the patient who has often had to nurse herself, as most of us have at one time or another, it is very pleasant to be so very thoroughly taken care of. Perhaps the most remarkable thing that is too much trouble is partly due to the fact that the little nurses are all Christians. To the patient who has often faced the challenge of doing everything alone, it is much appreciated by the American staff and by the English language nurses and by the English language nurses and collectively. She is a very sweet and medically in the types of cases treated. The need is still appalling, and it will take years to dispel the ignorance and superstition which is rife. A baby of two was brought to us with the history that it had been sick for twenty-six days. When the illness began the baby had very high fever and was delirious in order to make the baby close its eyes and sleep, the native doctor advised them to put ginger juice into the eyes. The little one closed his eyes and not only opened them when they brought him to us more than three weeks later, He will never see again as the ginger juice proved to be such a severe irritant that the cornea was destroyed in both eyes.

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covers the cost of transportation to and from the hospital each day. She lives quite a distance from the hospital and is not strong enough to walk the distance twice a day.

The White Cross means a great deal as without it we would be seriously handicapped financially as our budget does not provide for the upkeep along the lines cared for by the White Cross. The people often marvel that the things come to us without our having to pay for them and are still more amazed when they learn that it is because people in America, never having seen them, love them and desire to help them.

Dorothy Kinney.

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