

BOOK REVIEW

Aids To Tropical Nursing

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Messrs. Bailliere, Tindall and Cox. London. 1944.—Price Rs. 4.

We look forward to this useful book by Miss Cocker, which will certainly fill a very long felt need. It should prove most useful, not only to student and graduate nurses in civil hospitals, but also to all nursing officers stationed in this country and in other tropical and sub-tropical climates.

The book is divided into sections, the introductory chapters deal with personal care and hygiene, the second part with climatic disorders and the third with deficiency diseases, but the bulk of the volume comprises the tropical diseases in alphabetical order and there is an excellent chart summarising those which are communicable.

It is a pity that neither osteo-malacia, Xerophthalmia, xerophthalmia nor night blindness are mentioned under the heading of deficiency diseases, the treatment for scorpion bite leaves room for expansion and, since the culprit has never been identified, it is considered extremely doubtful whether spiders really bite at all. These however are very small details and the points we emphasise with great appreciation are that all the important diseases are carefully considered in detail, that the treatments described are the most up-to-date, that no other book of this kind is procurable and that it has the great advantage of having been written in the tropics from first hand knowledge. The book is well set out, the paragraphing and the arrangement of the chapters render it easy to study and the nursing care is well defined.

Aids to Tropical Nursing will fill a very long felt need very ably, we only hope the authorities will allow an adequate numbers of copies to be imported and as this valuable book is on the high seas we hope it will have arrived by the time this is printed. Copies will be obtainable from Messrs. Thacker and Spink, Esplanade, Calcutta and readers should send their orders to them at once to avoid disappointment.

ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE

Miss L. M. Hosie.

Pages from a Diary of an I. M. N. S. Sister.

February 13th, 1942.

(Of course I'm making this entry later. My diary with every thing else was lost) What a Day! I have lived through it and yet it seems unreal, like a terrible dream. Orders came to leave the hospital. We stood for what seemed an endless age on the wharf waiting to be taken to a ship. Behind us flames licked the sky as building after building caught ablaze. We watched the skeletons of one building after another become silhouetted against the light and then collapse. The harbour was full of smoke. We could not talk to one another because the din was so great that no one could hear what was being said.

About 4-30 p.m., we boarded the Kuala amid a hail of bombs and machine gunfire and smoke. The little boat had a hard time getting us out to the ship and had to zigzag constantly to keep from being hit. We climbed aboard and crouched in the first free space we could find. Bombs seemed to be falling in the water all around us. More of the staff arrived. Then there was a tremendous crash. We began to rock violently. The ship next to ours had received a direct hit. It was gone.

About 7-30 p.m., in the cover of dusk we began to drift out of the harbour. Gradually the Captain increased speed and we were well away. I began to look

round for the rest of the staff we had lost a few; but the majority were on board although some had minor injuries. How beautiful the night sky with its myriads of stars! How friendly the darkness.

February 14th, 1942.

The morning was bright and we were steaming along peacefully until about 11 a.m. Then we heard the roar of planes. I believe the Japs knew we had made our get away and were out to look for us. They spotted us and swooped down. The Captain made sure we all had our life belts on. In a few seconds we were showered with bombs. The boiler got a direct hit. There was no time to be lost. We were all dropped into the sea. Those who could swim made for Pam Pam Island which was not far off. Many of us who could not swim were carried by the tide miles out to sea. We floated in the icy water for hours. There was no sign of rescue. All the life boats had been bombed. The sea was very rough.

About 3-30 p.m. I was thrown up on a raft. I never knew just how I got there. The sea just seemed to suddenly toss me upon it. There were already 6 people from our ship on it. All had wounds of some kind. I noticed for the first time that my own leg had a shrapnel cut. There wound in the back.

The flesh was torn away and you could see the spine for some inches. How I longed to dress it. To put him in bed in a hospital, to call the doctor. I could see he was in great pain. His courage was inspiring. He never made a complaint and kept encouraging the rest of us. The sun was scorching. We tried hard to paddle the raft along with our hands; but were unsuccessful. It got us nowhere and we became very tired and thirsty. As the sun sank down in the western sky we began to cool off; and as night came on it was bitterly cold again.

February 15th, 1942.

About midnight our raft caught on some rocks. We crawled off to rest a little but finding the rocks insecure and crumbling the young engineer advised us to get back onto the raft. This we did at once and pushed out to sea again. It was not long after this that our engineer left us. I suddenly realized he was dead. The severe wound and the cruel exposure had been more than his body could stand, but his spirit was undaunted to the end. Just before dawn our raft came into a swamp. We found ourselves near an island. We could dimly see the low white line of the sandy beach and the black outline of coconut trees.

How glad we were to get ashore. We were shaking with cold and buried ourselves in the sand of the beach to break the wind. I was fast asleep almost at once and knew nothing more till the sun was well up. The island seemed to be uninhabited. It was only a small one; and there were no signs of human life anywhere. Our throats were parched with thirst, and the fresh young coconuts on the trees near the beach looked most tempting. I was the first to try to scale the slender long trunk of a well laden tree. I ended by a most inceremonious decent landing in a heap on an ant's nest. We had much laughter and fun out of our attempts but try as we would we could not get any coconuts. So we gave up and made a mast out of a long bamboo on which we tied a shirt. We waived it and yelled in our best Malaya, hoping to be heard. We were indeed lucky. About noon we saw a wee boat with two fishermen in it. We signalled and yelled. They came to our rescue, gave us black coffee to drink, and took us in their boat to their huts. Their women folk brought out Malayan clothes for us to wear. For me there was a multicoloured jacket and gay serian. It was a relief to get out of our torn dirty things and fun to see each other in native dress. Next we were served rice bowls full of steaming rice and greens. The village folk stood around and watched us eat. They were delighted with our use of chop sticks. They then gave us grass mats on which to rest. These were to be our beds for the night. We were ready to turn in early. As I lay there looking up at the glory of the night sky a great wave of thanks giving flooded my soul.

February 16th, 1942.

It seems that the little island on which our fisher friends live is very near Rhio Island which is a Japanese possession. This morning the news came that Singapore had fallen. It at once stirred up great excitement. Our presence was recognised as a great danger to the village. If the Japs should find us here what might not be the price demanded? We were asked to return their gay Malayan clothes we had been lent and to leave as soon as possible. Once more we dressed in our rage. We looked as though we were ready for a hard time party. About 3 p.m. this afternoon the Dutch Police took us by motor launch to Senagand Island. Here we nurses were able to get supplies and dress the wounds of all our party. We were also able to get Chinese clothes. Its mufti now-a-days of whatever kind available. Wonder if the fishes are enjoying my uniform. It seems strange to have no knit.

February 17th, 1942.

About 10 this morning Major Inglis brought us by Sanpan to this Dutch Island Dalner. Here we found hundreds of other survivors already collected. Controller DePutler is in charge of the camp. He has set aside a small building to be used as a Hospital. We nurses got to work at once, organising, planning, improvising. There will be no lack of patients but supplies and equipment are testing our ingenuity. It is good to be at work. When we finished dressing our patients we took turns doing each others dressings.

February 26th, 1942.

We have been here almost a week now. It seems impossible but its true. We have been so busy in our little hospital. Our patients are getting along nicely too. A Dutch doctor named Dr. Linger arrived this afternoon in a little steam launch which he had converted into a Hospital Ship. She is a small little craft but the doctor claims she can carry twenty patients. He calls her the "Heather". Dr. Linger made rounds and examined many of our cases. He talks of taking some of the most serious cases in his Hospital ship to a place where they can get better treatment than we can give them here.

February 27th, 1942.

I was selected to be one of the nurses to go with the patients Dr. Linger is taking in the "Heather." Most of the day we have been busy getting ready for the trip. We had to get the ship ready, and our patients ready and to say goodbye to all our friends. We left the Island about 8 p.m. and are now slipping through the black water in the cover of night.

February 28th, 1942.

We are in the Hospital at Tarboo tonight. We arrived at Jambee about 3 a.m. morning. We all got some sleep after the little launch made dock and when I woke tea and quaker oats porridge was waiting for me. What a treat! I don't know when I've enjoyed anything so much. At 11 a.m. we left Jambee by van. We had a rather difficult trip because there were three rivers to cross by Ferry. We did not get here till about 8 p.m. The Dutch people have been very kind to us and to our patients. This is a beautiful clean little hospital. We nurses too are kept in the hospital for the night.

March 1st, 1942.

This has been a day of great beauty. We have almost forgotten the war and all its horrors. We left Tarboo by van at 9 a.m. and have been riding all day through the most wonderful scenery. We reached Savalunto at 9 p.m. and again were entertained at the Hospital. We had a delicious supper and now bed is calling me.

March 3rd, 1942.

We left Savalunto by train yesterday noon. By 7 p.m. we arrived at Padang, the last Dutch possession in the Sumatra. At 9-30 p.m. we were taken by train to the wharf to board a cargo boat the "De Weert". We had only been on board a short time when an alarm was given. I think it must have been about 11 p.m. We sailed from Padan at 3 a.m. this morning. How we have managed to escape complete destruction is a wonder. We seem to be in constant danger. Our Captain and our Dutch engineer are splendid.

March 9th, 1942.

Arrived at Colombo about 9 a.m. Our voyage has been a nightmare and much credit is due to the Captain and his staff for bringing us safely to port.

March 11th, 1942.

We left Colombo by train.

March 12th, 1942.

At 7 a.m. arrived at Sea Port "Talimannar". At 9-30 we left Talimannar by a steam launch. At 11-30 a.m. the same day we arrived at Dhanishkodi.

March 12th, 1942.

At 12 noon we left Dhanishkodi by train.

March 13th, 1942.

At 7 a.m. arrived at Madras station and at 9 a.m. we left Madras by train.

March 14th, 1942.

At 12 noon we arrived at Bombay Victoria Terminus. We were met at the station by a friend of ours who very kindly took us to the Indian Military Hospital and from there we were taken to the Sisters Quarters where we remained for a fortnight.

We little realised it took us a month on our Robinson Crusoe's trip and except for the tragedy of circumstances we rather enjoyed ourselves.

THE WORK OF THE JOINT WAR ORGANISATION.

The title of this short article has been chosen for a definite reason; it is not generally known that the Joint War Organisation is the official title given to the work of the Indian Red Cross and St. John as it affects Indian prisoners-of-war and the sick and wounded men of the forces. The full title is, of course, 'The Joint War Organisation of the Indian Red Cross Society and the St John Ambulance Association.'

It must be remembered that the work of the Joint War Organisation is not concerned with, what may be called, the peace time work of the Indian Red Cross or St. John, and which those two bodies continue to pursue during war; maternity welfare, the instruction in first-aid and so on. The work of the Joint War Organisation (generally known as the Indian Red Cross and St. John) may be divided into two main sections, (a) service to Indian prisoners-of-war, (b) the supply of comforts to the sick and wounded of the forces in India, Iraq, Iran and the Middle East.

If it is conceded that the work of the Indian Red Cross and St. John operates wherever an Indian prisoner-of-war is to be found, then its work may be said to stretch half across the world.