

Our Foreign Letter.

LETTER FROM A NURSE'S NOTE BOOK WHILE WORKING IN CENTRAL ASIA.



DEAR EDITOR,
—I wonder if you would like to tell the story of a nurse's cat. One day, some six years ago, there was a great flood, and the Jehem

River overflowed its banks. A woman came into the operating room saying, "Oh! Mem, we are all lost, the waters have come." The lady doctor was removing an eye, and said, "Do send her out of the room." I was giving the chloroform at the time, and as the doctor could not speak the language, I gave the order to the native nurse to ask the woman to go away. Suddenly there was a great commotion, women pulling their hair, slapping their breasts, and calling on Allah to save them.

I asked Nur, our native nurse, to go out and see what was the matter, she returned in a wild state and said we were all lost, the waters were upon us, and that the embankment on the dispensary side of the building had given way, and that the water was up to the first step all over the compound. Orders were given that while the Doctor finished the operation and I saw the patient come out of the chloroform, some one was to go and get boats.

Alas! not knowing the danger we were in, flat bottomed rice boats came, and we put all the patients from the Hospital in first, like sardines in a box. Then we got all the out-patients on to other boats, then a rush to the go-downs or (storeroom), for rice-flour, or anything we could lay hands on in the way of food. The boats had only just cleared off when down came the greater part of our buildings, whose foundations melted like sugar, or salt, as they were of sunburnt bricks. Most of the medicines, and all the instruments, fortunately, we had managed to save.

Passing the stables there was a poor cat crying so pitifully, I said to the boatman, Oh! do get that poor cat. No, he said it was only a cat and we were so overloaded there might be an accident, and it was only a jungle old thing, and would be savage and bite. She cried and looked so pitifully at us. I begged again, but "no" was the answer, as it would bite, and what then could he do. So I said, if you will kneel down and let me stand on your back I will take the cat down. I called her, and she came and let me take her. She jumped out of my arms and ran behind some of the things that were all heaped up. A few days after she began to come out and let us pet her. At night we used to put a blanket on the boards and lie down. I always put a little milk near my sleeping place. One morning I woke up to find two little kittens and their mother sleeping snugly in my lap. I thought this was too much of a good thing, so I took an old petticoat

and put the mother and kittens in a corner. Not a bit would she stop there; she took up a kitten in her mouth, and got into my blanket again. When the little things were ten days old the poor mother got hurt and died. Oh! the trouble of bringing up the little ones. We tried a bottle, but no. So a little piece of lint was soaked in milk, and their mouths opened, and it was wonderful how they lived at all, the constant feeding they had from one person and another. When they could begin to lap I gave one away, the other I kept, and he grew into such a fine cat, he would follow me about like a dog. When I returned to England I brought my darling with me. We came by boat from Srinagar to Barámullá, two nights and a day. From Barámullá to Rawalpindi by Mail Tongá, three days; Rawalpindi to Bombay by train, one week; from Bombay to London by P. and O. steamboat V—. All through the journey he behaved quite properly, and was made the greatest fuss of by all the passengers. At first settling in England I kept him on his chain, until he got used to his new home. We had been in England just over a year, when one day I was watering the front garden, and pussie was lying by the gate enjoying the sun. I went to get a fresh lot of water, and when I returned my cat was no where to be seen. I called and called, but no answer; and from that day to this I have never seen or heard of my faithful companion. He was such a beauty, with long grey-blue fur—such a bush of a tail and large eyes—and as gentle as a lamb. I feel sure had he been taken away, if his history had been known, they would have returned him to his loving old Nurse. One of the charms of living in Central Asia, I found, was the bird life. The birds are so tame, with a very little trouble one can train them to come into the house and take food from one's hand, and sit on one's head, or hand, or shoulder. I fear I was often naughty instead of going off for a ride or walk in the early morning or evening. I spent the time calling my different birds. At first I had only two bulbuls that would come, and they fought any other birds like mad that dared to come near. In time they learnt to behave themselves, and got quite friends with the kingfishers, miners, and the hopu, and baby duke. The one thing I could never quite understand was how the hopu came year after year. The same each year after they were once tamed. They leave Central Asia for India about the middle of September, and return in May, and yet the two which came hopping in, making such a fuss until we noticed them, were they the same birds each year. Or how did they know the house and friends? There was one nurse, as soon as she came into the room, off they went on to the top of some out of the way place, and yet to three of us they would come and feed out of our lips or hands whenever we called them.

The Bulbul would build their nest in our rooms. The Kingfishers by the lake near the hospital. But I never could find a hopu nest, and whenever I asked a native about it they did not seem to know.

I am, dear Editor,

Yours truly,

ELIZABETH NEWMAN.

[P.S.—I must thank you for "What to Read," for most of the books you name in the NURSING RECORD I get for my patients. We are now reading a "Thousand Days in the Arctic," by F. Jackson.]

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