

The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

Our Colleague takes a Holiday.

Northern Rhodesia.

DEAR MISS BRYSON,

I was very delighted with the Christmas gift you sent to me in the form of the Queen Mother's Golden Souvenir Book ; such lovely pictures of our beloved Royal Family. I am sorry not to have written sooner, but time seems to go quicker in a hot climate, I don't know why. I cannot really say I enjoy Christmas in the heat—plum pudding certainly doesn't taste the same, and this year, or rather last year, we had an unusually busy time in the Mine hospital—we had all kinds of emergencies and casualties which decidedly took from us the Christmas spirit.

Just before Christmas I took my five days " casual leave," and together with two school teacher friends we went " up country " as the saying goes, to see the country, relax, and enjoy ourselves. My little car, a Hillman Minx—which I had only had and learnt to drive three months—was packed to capacity. The distances between " places " are so great and one must be prepared for anything. Water for the car—and water for ourselves in " cooler " bag, hung from every available part of the car ; a four-gallon can of petrol for emergency use only, oil, a tow-rope, and one should carry chains (not for snow but for mud !). We took food—mostly tinned—bread for as long as it would last—not getting too stale ! We planned to stay the nights at Government Rest Houses as much as possible—where linen was provided and we were surprised to find that towels were also provided, although we had taken these ourselves. We had a great idea about butter—which proved very successful. I had a wide-necked thermos flask, so ice was put in the bottom of the flask and then the butter in greaseproof paper—it lasted wonderfully, and I believe some butter arrived back quite edible.

We set out on a Thursday afternoon, leaving Kitwe about 2.15—all set for a grand time, in holiday and Christmas spirit. The first 30 odd miles to Mufulira, another mine town, was on a tarmac road and uneventful. When I say tarmac it does not mean the whole width is tarmacked—but just the width of, say, a large lorry, this means that when passing other cars, each has to get off a portion—each passing car has two wheels on tarmac and two wheels on dirt road, naturally one has to reduce speed. But some tarmac is better than the dirt roads. At Mufulira we had to get exit permits to enable us to travel through the " strip " of Belgian Congo—another fifteen miles further on brought us to the Congo barriers and border where our passports, etc. and triptyque (licence and car number) had to be examined. These formalities took us about half-hour—then on.

At this point I must mention I was at the wheel, and I'm ashamed to say, did not notice the change of road sign, and continued gaily travelling on the *left-hand* side of the road ! However that was not to be for long ! A lorry ahead, as I said " on the wrong side of the road "—my passengers said not a word—had they faith or what ? I stuck to my side quite unperturbed, until, as the lorry did not move—I was driving precariously near to the edge of the road and the ditch when I think it dawned on all three of us at once—" Continental road law—keep to the *right*." So I pulled up and stopped, and the oncoming lorry passed us on our right—no doubt saying a few things about those stupid British ! After that lesson I continued on the right-hand side of the road, and counted my blessings that nothing worse had come of my lapse than a few words.

The scenery here was not interesting—bush and trees and a long straight road until we came to the Luapula River, where a motor ferry-boat took us across and we were once

more in British territory—the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia. Going through the Congo " strip " or pedical as it is sometimes called, we had only seen a few odd native thatched huts—not even a proper village—no sign of life at all. The ferry ceases to function at 6 p.m., this was now about 5.30 p.m., so once over the river we decided it was high time to have a " cup o' tea," and very welcome it was too. But we didn't dally as we still had 50 miles to go before reaching Fort Rosebery, our first night stop ; and of course by the Luapula river we were in a mosquito area, although we all three had started taking anti-malarial precautions five days previously, we didn't want to risk too much. It was quite dark by the time we reached Fort Rosebery and the Government Rest House. Here the first thing that struck me as we got out of the car was the tiny twinkling lights on the ground—and little sparks of light flying through the air—glow-worms on the ground and all over the fireflies in the air—a wonderful and fascinating sight.

The Government Rest House was very comfortable—a large sitting-room—dining-room, almost like a hall with high lofty roof. We could have any tinned food, there was a really good selection ; we had brought ours with us, so we had no need to buy. An African cook-boy prepared us a very excellent well-cooked meal of bacon, eggs and vegetables, followed by tinned fruit, after which sumptuous repast we were ready for a hot bath and bed. The lavatory and bath arrangements were very good—lighting was by oil lamps and candles—but always remember on these tours to carry electric torches—not every Rest House is like Fort Rosebery, there are many where " toilets " are down the garden path, and one does need to beware of snakes. We had an excellent night's sleep, a good breakfast, and after first having a " look-see " at Fort Rosebery we set out for Kasama ; a distance of about 200 miles.

The dirt road was comparatively good according to standards out here, wide with " bush " and trees on either side, stretching miles ahead of us. After about two hours' going we had morning tea by the roadside ; we chose a spot where we could get a " view " (in Copperbelt there are practically no " views," the bush is more or less flat—on a plateau—and one can't see over the tops of the trees).

It was when we were about 35 miles from Kasama and about 12.30 p.m., that the car just " petered " out, and wouldn't budge another yard. We tried various ways, but we were all three inexperienced motor mechanics, so we had to give up and wait to be overtaken. We were very fortunate and didn't have to wait long, actually we knew there was a car behind us, as we had passed it on the road, and before long we hailed it with delight. The driver, an Afrikaans, turned out to be a good mechanic, though I must admit as I saw the " innards " of the car being dismantled I wondered whether it would ever be put together again. I was more for asking our friend to go forward and send us back help from Kasama. However, after two hours we were on the road again, and very grateful we were to our " Good Samaritan," especially as he had a wife and children in his car, not too pleasant for them having to sit and wait in the car in the midday hot sun. He advised me strongly to have the petrol tank cleaned out properly at our next stop, as the trouble was undoubtedly due to dirt in the petrol tank. We reached the Luo-Lua Hotel, two miles out of Kasama about 3.15 p.m., a comparatively new hotel which serves the airport. We were very comfortable there and the food was good.

The following morning, having previously made an appointment at the garage we took the car into Kasama, and while the car was being attended to, we wandered round. Some very nice houses ; Kasama is the chief " town " of the Northern Province, the seat of the District Commissioner and Provincial Commissioner—quite an important place with Post Office and Boma (police-station) and around about two

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