

Our Foreign Letter.

PLAGUE NURSING IN INDIA.

No. 2.—IN A NATIVE STATE.



IN Bombay we found that Plague had so far declined that all the temporary hospitals had been closed, and only the permanent Infectious Hos-

pital, Arthur Road, now received the few cases that still cropped up. Four days later I went on duty there, two other sisters, who had not left Bombay, with ward boys and ayahs, completing the nursing staff. In a few days the Eurasian nurses, who had been left in Cutch, broke down, and resigned, desiring at once to return to Bombay. The sister who with me had first gone up to Mandvi, and I, together with another sister (my friend), volunteered to return, as we heard that Plague had broken out in the villages, and in exactly a fortnight after our reaching Bombay we were again in the train on our way back to Cutch. For it was the time of the Monsoon, and the steamboats could not call at the port of Mandvi, so the journey had to be done overland.

We spent a day in Morvi, Kathiawar, the end of our train journey, where there was much to interest—the well-appointed stables of the Tharkore, with their 650 horses of almost all kinds, except our massive shire horses, the carriage-houses, with not only native State carriages, but hansom cabs, American road cars, electric and oil motor cars. The electric search light played on us, as we sat on the balcony in the eve, for the Tharkore is an electrical engineer, as well as a very advanced man—a light suspension bridge crosses the broad river, and much else. We also visited the civil hospital, which consists of several bungalows, united by raised covered paths, the end bungalow being used as a mineral water factory, from which a large district round is supplied. We enquired if Plague had ever visited them, and they told us that when Plague was found to be spreading from Bombay the Tharkore ordered the most stringent measures to be taken to prevent its importation. A cordon of police were placed on the roads leading to the city, all travellers were examined, and strangers strictly quarantined. The people in and round the city had been ordered to whitewash their houses, and strip off the tiles, to allow the sun and air to penetrate, and thus not a single case was imported.

It was very hot in Morvi, and we were not sorry to continue our journey, which was thirty miles in a horse tram—thus we reached Vavania, and from there we crossed the Gulf of Cutch in a steam launch, which took four hours, then by dak to Bhuj, thirty-five miles distant. We arrived at the Guest House here at 1.30 a.m., and though dinner was still waiting, we were too tired to enjoy it, but got to rest quickly. Bhuj is interesting from its well-preserved city walls and gates, the bazaar, the far-famed silversmiths' shops, the gardens, the palaces, the tombs of the kings, and the only Christian Church in the State. The next day we

finished our journey, another thirty-five miles by dak, which is rather a pleasant mode of travelling—a landau, good pair of horses, relays every eight or nine miles, in the cool morning or evening air. We soon settled in to our old Sykes' Bungalow on the sea shore, which seemed so quiet with only three of us in it.

On the morrow, 1st August, 1897, we went to the Brahmapoori Hospital, and found about twelve women and seven men in-patients, many of them being old cases, slowly convalescing. All the new cases were being supplied by the villages, and the labour of bringing the sick folk in, besides the harm it did them, was very patent to us all, and my friend and I begged the English doctor to let us go to the villages most infected, and nurse the people on the spot. On the 4th inst. I started to our first jungle station, where presently I spent three very busy, happy months.

A bullock shigram, though drawn by two fine animals, is not a very expeditious mode of travelling through the jungle, since we were two hours going the eight miles to Gundiali. Certainly, there was a little delay occasioned by my hamil exclaiming, "Memsahib, burra samp," and there not far from us was a large black snake gliding gracefully along. We were quickly out and chasing it, and on enquiry, learning that it was "bahut karab" (very bad one), I told them to kill it, for several other men had come up; but it was not until the serpent, finding it could not escape, coiled itself up, raised its head some twelve inches, and spreading its hood, prepared to strike, that I recognised the deadly cobra. It was just then they struck it, and soon the beautiful thing was lifeless. I had it tied up to the shigram, and in triumph we proceeded on our way.

The English doctor was waiting when I arrived, and we went at once to the hospital—the school-house consisting of three fair-sized rooms being converted into a hospital for Hindus, and a small Dharamsala close by for the Mahomedans. Some seven patients were in the Hindu Hospital, and I proceeded to take down name, age, caste, bubo, where situated, temperature, pulse, and respiration of each in my note book, to be put on charts as soon as they could be got ready. A few medicines had been sent out, and later in the day a Parsee hospital assistant came out, a list was made of requirements and sent to the Wahiwabdar, who is the chief officer over a Taluka, or large district, and who always supplied us with stores—we wanted mattresses, which were made of a little raw cotton-wool in unbleached calico cases, sheets of the same, some blankets, gagra and odhnies (skirts and head drapery) for the women, calico pyjama suits for the men, dressings, &c., such were our simple requirements. The lunch tent was put up in the hospital compound, and Dr. M. gave the Dhroo, the head-man of the village, orders to carry out all our wishes, so with him arrangements were made as to the amount of milk and other food for the patients to be supplied daily to the native cook, and I was free to go back to the patients.

Again we felt the want of ice, which in Bombay was supplied to us so lavishly—ice to be eaten, for ice-packs, for ice bags over buboes, and the heads of the delirious, or ones with high temperature; but here not a morsel was to be had, so antipyrin, or phenacetin when we could get it, and sponging with cold water, were our only methods of treating high temperature. It was a busy day this first, but as it wore on, the

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