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## LECTURE.

### NURSING DURING THE FLOODS AND THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC IN CHINA.

We never heard a more enthralling lecture than that given at Headquarters on February 24th by Miss Gladys Stephenson, Principal of the Union Hospital, Hankow. It was like listening to someone talking of the Crusades or other medieval adventures because, although the lecture was given in a very matter-of-fact way and interspersed with continually recurring humour, yet, behind it all, one could not but realise that we were hearing a story of high adventure and never-failing courage, resting on an unconquerable faith in the goodness of God. The night was the stormiest we have had this year and the audience was therefore smaller than usual, but what it lacked in numbers was made up for in enthusiasm, and round upon round of applause greeted Miss Stephenson when the lights went up at the close of her lecture.

Miss Stephenson commenced by introducing us to some of the difficulties of the Chinese language, which, of course, she speaks fluently, and she told us a number of most amusing stories of the complete change of sense in a word, according to whether it is spoken on a high or low note. For instance, she related how in a school an English teacher was asked by the children to tell them something of the "big girls" in England. She commenced with some commonplace piece of information, given, as she thought, in Chinese, and it was met with every gesture of contradiction and with hot dissent. Ultimately she found that having paid attention only to the words she used, she had informed the children that English girls married every morning and repented every evening! A more or less similar error occurred in the case of a Chinese nurse who was instructed to use the word expectoration in preference to sputum, and in making her report stated that "the expectoration was not expected." Many amusing tales of this kind were related. Usually the Chinese are marvellously polite and will listen to the most absurd statements without the flicker of an eyelid. Miss Stephenson said that Chinese is a picture language and gave us examples of, for instance, how the letter V turned upside down stands for a man and how the addition of a line above, a dot or two, or some such addition would change the meaning of the word altogether.

In speaking of the advancement of nursing in China, Miss Stephenson said that in 1915 seven Chinese nurses presented themselves for examination, of whom three passed; last year over three thousand, two hundred nurses passed the State Examination. The fact that the Chinese set a very high value on learning is an important factor in maintaining the prestige of the nursing profession; there was no difficulty in getting it recognised as a profession in China once the Examinations began and books and learning were indicated as necessary to the making of a nurse. Miss

Stephenson gave us an indication of what the examinations implied when she told us that they go on throughout a full week (exclusive of Sunday); a separate day is set aside for each subject and in all sixty questions have to be answered.

But the thrill of the lecture came when the lights were lowered and the pictures were put on the screen. First there was the inevitable map and later followed a long series of pictures of the flood in China. An idea of what this meant, from July to November, was indicated by a view showing the fine entrance to the hospital grounds with great stone globes on the top of the high pillars; these disappeared under the water for months and, if it was a thrill to us to see the "knobs" appearing through the water on a picture, what must it have been to those in the flooded area to watch their gradual reappearance. It must have brought something of the same sensation as the return of the dove gave to Noah! One of the first indications of what the flood meant was the crash of the Women Nurses' Home, into the water, not fifty yards away from the wards. The lighting gave out and the nursing and supervision of the hospital was undertaken in the light of hand lanterns. Many a tale of heroism was told, and here in England we listened spellbound to stories of the courage and endurance of the nurses of China; cheers greeted each instance of the manner in which they met the almost insuperable difficulties of flood and plague. But not the least of these tales of courage was one, told in a simple humorous way, of the last night Miss Stephenson spent in her own house. The water was high in her bedroom and tables and chairs floated about; before going to bed Miss Stephenson asked the medical man what was to be done if the water rose to the mattress. His answer was not recorded, but Miss Stephenson went to bed and to sleep and did not wake until morning! Now the whole episode seems to have taken on the character of a good joke in her mind.

The first emergency hospital was opened at the Library of Bowne in Hankow and was organised and run, said Miss Stephenson, with marvellous efficiency under great difficulties by Miss Haward, who trained at the London Hospital. Here the women were nursed and soon after a Red Cross Hospital Ship was sent from Shanghai for the men. Picture followed picture showing the wreckage resulting from the flood which extended over 34,000 square miles. Pathetic enough they were these pictures and eloquent of the terrible risks under which the work of caring for the sick was carried on; it was curious to hear the description of these risks given in such an impersonal sort of way, with every now and again a jaunty laugh at the remembrance of this or that adventure.

As time went on matters became more complicated and soon the hillsides round Hankow were covered with the small rough tents, of sacking or mats, of those whom the flood drove before it. Soon a hundred and four thousand had gathered and the number went on increasing. Cholera broke out, and we were shown many pictures indicating the

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