

A NURSING SISTER IN BALUCHISTAN.

Under the above title a series of letters by Miss J. M. Morris, a Nursing Sister of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, are published in attractive book form by the Zenith Press, 19-21, Southampton Street, Fitzroy Square, London W.1. The brown paper cover, with red inset throwing into relief a camel carrying two women, at once arrests attention, and is evidently designed by an artist, for camels somewhat forbidding in appearance in real life, with dusty coats and cruel faces, make admirable pictures, and this one is particularly felicitous. Numerous illustrations are included in the book, which is the simple story, simply told, of work in connection with mission hospitals in Baluchistan and Kashmir, and at the price of 1s. it is incredibly cheap.

Baluchistan, on the North West Frontier of India, is, the author admits, a somewhat unfriendly looking country, with khaki-coloured mountains and bare arid scenery, but lovely lights transfigure the hills at certain times in the year, especially at sunset. "Naturally," she says, "if one had a passion for trees I suppose Baluchistan would leave one cold; but with those with a passion for desert, for wide, wild, lonely places, Baluchistan satisfies."

Like all nurses who go abroad, the author found the language question not only important but difficult, thus she writes:—"When I went to Quetta in 1921 I was just beginning to pick up Urdu, or Hindustani as it is called, after three months' study in Amritsar, and you can imagine my dismay and utter helplessness to find that about six or seven languages were spoken at the new station, especially as I arrived in summer time, when no end of wanderers drift into the hospital. On one or two occasions, in fact, we got a patient whose lingo baffled even Ros Bibi (a native helper) and her mother, who could usually find some point of contact which helped them to understand the needs of patients... but my impotence made me more and more determined to conquer the language difficulty as soon as possible. The patients seemed to think they need fear nothing once they were understood."

But patience and forbearance are needed, for though a patient (and her relations!) may be given a place in an allotted ward they have views of their own and betake themselves to another. The nurse remains firm, but that is not the end.

"What do I find in the morning?"

"As soon as they thought it was safe the whole family had removed goods and chattels as well as themselves to the much coveted ward, and there they had all slept!"

"I reproach the young night nurse and ask why she has allowed this to happen, but she says: 'Miss Sahib, I was quite helpless—they said they were cold on the verandah, and nothing I could do would budge them!'"

The class of girls who present themselves for training also presents difficulties. In India, up till now, the work of a doctor or nurse has been "taboo," as the touching of blood or anything soiled has been repulsive to them—making them unclean, as it were.

Then again, "sometimes girls finally turn to nursing because they are not considered mentally capable of anything else—that is, their schoolmistresses consider this the case! Why do so many people, I wonder, consider nursing work as a last resort for the 'not very bright girl'? Surely it is most responsible work, and work that needs intelligence, and the powers of rapid decision. After all, the patients' life is in the hands of the nurse, and by just a slip one might cause death, or by stupidity fail to save a life."

Well this attitude of mind on the part of teachers has to be reckoned with in this country also, where for the most part they have been entirely indifferent to the claim of the nursing profession that they should direct the attentions of girls of a high standard mentally and physically to the opportunities which it offers.

The author writes of her time in Kashmir: "I have been in Kashmir for one year, and I would not have missed that experience for anything. I came here thinking I knew something of the sufferings of the women of the East, but I find that one half has not been told me. I feel sure that if some of you knew you would prepare to come and help these sisters of ours who sit in great darkness. There is a tremendous need, and life is always full of interest for those who serve in this great work."

Since the date of this letter from Kashmir new wards have been built and many much-needed improvements have been carried out, making the place more workable, and providing suitable quarters for

some of the trained nursing staff, with the help of whom the work at Ranawari Hospital is steadily progressing.

The book is well worth reading.



THE LADAKHI NURSE AT RANAWARI HOSPITAL.



ON THE RIVER JHELUM AT SRINAGAR, KASHMIR, WITH THE HOSPITAL "SHIKARI" IN THE FOREGROUND.

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