

"She said it very simply . . . 'there's such a thing as service.'

"I thought to myself: 'When I get well I shall remember that.' Remember how it cheered her during those long night hours when tortured people were tossing about in their beds, staring at her with hot, angry eyes, seeking for any relief from their misery."

* * *

"Those long night hours when she sat alone, her youth slowly fading, while other girls were dancing, flirting, and being adored.

"There's such a thing as service."

"Thank you, nurse."

"KARACHI TO CROYDON IN THREE DAYS."

On having been granted 61 days' leave from India, I determined to travel by air, and booked a return passage by the Royal Dutch Air Line, which left Karachi in the middle of July last year.

Never having flown before, I was thrilled at the thought of travelling at such a speed, and arriving in London in so short a time.

After a good breakfast at Karachi Aerodrome I went on board the air liner, a two-engined monoplane of the latest design. The other passengers were four Dutchmen from Batavia, and an Indian Cavalry officer.

The 'plane started at 9 a.m. Nothing much was to be seen either above or below us, except a greyish haze.

About midday we swooped down over Jask, a sandy, shadeless spot near the Persian Gulf. We had lunch there, and took on board a Dutchwoman and her five-months-old baby.

Directly after lunch we left for Bushire, and landed to refuel.

While there a wireless message came from Baghdad saying they were in the middle of a severe dust-storm, and that landing conditions were unfavourable.

The Commander therefore decided to remain at Bushire for the night, and leave for Baghdad the following morning, an hour and a half before dawn.

We were conveyed in cars to the K.L.M. Emergency Rest House about two miles away. We had dinner about 8 p.m. and all retired early, as we were to be called at 3 a.m.

After a somewhat restless night we were awakened punctually by the Persian servant, got up, dressed, and packed by the dim light of an oil lamp.

Even at that early hour it seemed terribly hot and airless, and we all looked forward to getting back to our comfortable, well-ventilated aeroplane.

After a light breakfast cars came for us. We were driven back to the aerodrome, and by about 4.30 a.m. we were all on board.

The 'plane taxied across the aerodrome so as to get head to wind, then raced across the aerodrome, which was still in darkness, in order to get up a "taking off" speed.

I was looking out with great interest, when suddenly it seemed that something was gravely wrong, and that we were about to crash.

"This," I thought, "is Fate."

Immediately there was a terrible impact as the right wing struck the ground. I was flung on my head on the opposite side of the 'plane.

In that instant I remembered that we were certain to go on fire. I rushed to the door, and flung myself out head first, still remembering that I must do nothing to hinder the remaining passengers and the four crew behind me.

I fell on my face in the sand; my head had by this time been cut open in two long gashes.

I turned to see if the fire had yet begun, and saw a white flame sweeping back towards the petrol tanks. I tried to get up, and found I could not move, owing to injury to my back.

At this juncture the British officer came running back and picked me up, and supporting me by the shoulders, dragged me off some hundreds of yards in order to get well away from the explosion of the tanks. Presently I felt I could go no farther, so sat down on the aerodrome and watched the blaze.

Meantime the officer took the Dutchwoman and her baby farther away. The scene was an awe-inspiring spectacle; the dark aerodrome and silence, except for the roar of the flames. In a few minutes the tanks blew up; the column of flame seemed to reach to heaven, and the hot wind fanned my face. Then the flames subsided, and the remains of our beautiful air liner were visible—nothing but a mass of twisted metalwork.

Everything was destroyed, including mail and luggage. All the passengers and crew escaped unhurt, seven of the former and four of the latter; no one was injured except myself, and even the baby escaped without a bruise.

Cars came rushing in from Bushire, and we were quickly conveyed back to the Rest House. There I was attended to by an assistant surgeon of the Indian Medical Department, who returned later and stitched my head. Someone brought me some tepid tea and biscuits. Then the Dutchmen came and swished the flies off me, and rigged up a mosquito net.

The heat was suffocating, so they carried my bed on to the verandah. About 10 o'clock the British Consul and his wife came down to see if they could render any assistance. They took the officer and the Dutchwoman to the British Residency, and removed me to their house, where they showered every kindness and attention on me. That afternoon a wireless message came to say that Captain Parmentier had left Amsterdam in a relief 'plane, and expected to arrive in 26 hours.

The following afternoon he arrived at 4 o'clock, and said he would take off at dawn the next day. At 3 a.m. I was awakened by the Consul's wife, given tea and biscuits and put into the Residency car. The Consul came with me, and we picked up the Dutchwoman and officer at the Residency close by.

Dawn was breaking as we reached the aerodrome. The relief 'plane was there, looking like a silver bird. Captain Parmentier and his crew as well as the wrecked crew were standing by the steps.

We were all hustled in quickly. Everything was very quiet. The crew jumped in, the door was shut, and we were up in the sky before we had time to be alarmed. The remainder of our journey was uneventful.

We breakfasted at Baghdad, lunched at Cairo, and spent the night at Athens. Next afternoon we reached Amsterdam, where we were besieged by camera men and reporters.

The British officer and I changed into the London 'plane. After a calm journey over the North Sea we landed at Croydon at 7.30 p.m. The first thing we saw on the posters was the announcement that another plane had crashed in Switzerland that afternoon and 13 were killed.

We felt it was good to be alive!

MABEL KENNEDY,
Principal Matron, Q.A.I.M.N.S.

By courtesy of the editor of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital "League News."

[It is indeed inspiring to note the attributes of Army Nurses in these days—courage they have always possessed. The new dangers prove them to be first-class British officers.—ED.]

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