

## NEWS OF MISS GLADYS STEPHENSON, F.B.C.N.

Just as we go to press we have received this most interesting letter from our Gladys Stephenson, a most enthusiastic member for many years of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., and have omitted less interesting items so that her war experience may be realised.

HOSPITAL OF UNIVERSAL LOVE,  
(METHODIST GENERAL HOSPITAL)  
HANKOW, CENTRAL CHINA.  
January 28th, 1946.

DEAR EDITOR OF "THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING."

As I am absolutely without news of the "B.J.N." or of the Nurses Club, R.B.N.A., for several years, I am hoping my letter thus addressed may reach someone who will be interested. I returned from leave in London to Hankow in April, 1940, and was able to live and work freely at this hospital until December, 1941, when Japan declared war on England and U.S.A. Previously, although Hankow was in the hands of Japan, we Britishers, as neutrals, were then unmolested, but on December 8, 1941, the Japanese Consul called our men together and told them that they were at war with us, and we must consider ourselves interned.

We were permitted to reside on our own compounds, and I continued working in the hospital, but was not permitted to leave its precincts until August, 1942; then we were all ordered to leave the city for the coast, thence to be sent home. However, on arriving at Shanghai we found we were not to be sent home, but we were all gradually, group by group, interned into various camps under prison regulations.

I happened to be interned in the country ten miles outside Shanghai, where nearly 2,000 British civilians were interned; many were of mixed birth but held British passports. The building was a former high school and several buildings had been destroyed by bombing. The remaining ones were repaired by our own occupants and used for living quarters. We were terribly crowded together with absolutely no privacy of any kind for anything, and our food was supposedly that of the Japanese troops. There was a small school infirmary building, holding 20 beds, which we used as a hospital and in which I worked all the time till release came. We were very busy indeed and this made the time fly, fortunately, though even then some days our internment seemed to be never-ending.

At long-last came the news of the surrender of the Japanese, and the gates of our camp were opened and Chinese friends streamed in with faces aglow with joy and with hands full of gifts for the internees. Day after day different Chinese organisations came and poured gifts upon us. Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-shek sent a most honourable deputation headed by a former Foreign Minister to Germany, and the Minister to Holland and Denmark with him. He brought us money and flowers and gave a most beautiful moving speech. They couldn't do enough for us, and I think it was done in their desire to bespeak their gratitude to the Allies, who had been instrumental in saving them from Japan. The Secretary of the Nurses' Association journeyed all night from Nanking to greet us nurses, and to urge me to go back with her to Nanking to help her in the office. This I was delighted to do and to see how the hospitals had fared while we'd been shut up. When I went into camp there were still 60 hospitals functioning throughout occupied China that were running a school of nursing. When I came out there were still 27. The rest had closed rather than become puppets of the Japanese. I found that our Chinese Secretary and the nurses on the board of directors had done splendidly in keeping the work of the schools going, and nearly 2,000 nurses had been able to complete their training and win

their diplomas. Our nurses' headquarters at Nanking, a beautiful building built entirely by money from the nurses, had escaped intact, and our library, offices, auditorium, etc., all were intact. Much of this was due to the devotion and self-sacrifice of Miss Revena Tien, the Chinese Secretary, who had a most thrilling story to tell of her difficulties with the Japanese.

From Nanking, after nearly three weeks, I was able to get on to a Chinese military steamer and come to Hankow, where we received a most heart-stirring welcome. Hankow had been severely and terribly bombed the previous winter, and the business section of the city lay in ruins for large areas. The nurses who were working in the down-town branch of the Union Hospital had a harrowing experience.

Planes appeared at midday while the operating theatre was in use and dropped bombs in the main ward, killed many patients instantly, and set the hospital ablaze. It burned fiercely clean down to the ground, and food stalls are now set up on the site. Our Methodist Hospital, being far up in the Chinese city, escaped narrowly and was the only hospital functioning in the city for all the wounded, and the small over-worked staff worked day and night through that period. No wonder we found them all tired and exhausted when we arrived in October, most of them having just recovered from an attack of Dengue Fever. My heart shrank within me as I saw the restricted water supply, lack of coal and electricity, no cloth or linen for towels, bedding, patients' clothes, etc., and yet I felt my heart swell too with pride as I saw the strenuous attempts the nurses had made to carry on as well as possible, and the splendid way they were serving the patients under such conditions truly made one thank God for such girls.

We still have no coal or electricity and no kerosene, and prices of everything are fantastic. Just this very day on which I write a consignment of drugs and some cotton wool and gauze has arrived from the United Nations Relief Committee, and we are truly grateful, but we have a long way to go before we reach normal. A new class of freshmen students were awaiting me and they have had four months of classroom work and now we have admitted another 25 student nurses to prepare for the Union Hospital, our sister institution at the other side of the city. That was occupied by Japanese wounded, and even now there are still some there not yet evacuated, but we are re-opening the wards as fast as the Japanese move out of them.

### THE NIGHTINGALE BRICK.

It was a great joy to find our Nurses' Home, built in war time and opened in July, 1940, with its Nightingale Brick built into the wall, quite intact, and how very much I enjoyed fetching out the photographs of graduating classes, cushions, curtains, etc., and once more hanging them up in peace time.

Last week a certain Dr. Andrew Hsu, elderly Chinese doctor, graduate of Aberdeen University many years ago, came to see our new Nurses' School building, and when I pointed out the Nightingale Brick set in the wall above the platform in the lecture hall, he asked permission to touch it. He took a chair, stood on it and put his fingers on the brick for several minutes. He has a great reverence for the memory of Florence Nightingale, and congratulated us on the possession of such a relic.

We are planning to hold a Nurses' National Conference in October this year, hoping that transportation and finance difficulties will have improved by then. But I may be in England on leave by July this year, so fear I may miss the Conference. I have not seen a "B.J.N." for five years and have no news of what has happened. I would be grateful for some news if you can possibly get it to me. How is Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and Miss Macdonald? My greetings. GLADYS E. STEPHENSON.

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