

WELCOME NEWS FROM CHINA.

THE NURSES' ASSOCIATION OF CHINA.

We are pleased to know that our dear Miss Gladys Stephenson is in our midst once more, having reached England in June, after the long war years, when from December 1941 she was, amongst other British citizens, interned by the Japanese in China and whose grim experiences have already been published in this Journal.

Miss Stephenson has sent us the following report of the great devotion to duty shown by Chinese nurses during the terrible occupation of their country by the Japanese.

In June of 1937, ten years of effort by the nurses of China came to a happy culmination in the opening of the Headquarters building at Nanking. The building was all and more than our dreams had pictured, and was opened free of debt, all paid for by the Nurses.

Amongst its special treasures was an autographed photograph of the president of the Royal British Nurses' Association, Princess Arthur of Connaught, S.R.N., and a Nightingale Brick.

A few weeks after this happy event, alas, came the invasion of the Japanese. Hastily the furnishings and treasures had to be packed up and plans made to cope with this disaster.

The Chinese government moved to Chungking, and all other offices followed it. The Nurses' Association could not take their fine building, and their work was urgently needed in the occupied areas as many hospitals were overwhelmed with sick and wounded and the Schools of Nursing needed to carry on. The student nurses examinations had only recently been taken over by the Ministry of Education, but they asked the Nurses' Association to resume charge of this work for all schools left in the invaded areas.

In this dilemma it was decided that the N.A.C. should divide its forces, the President, Secretary, and other officers to carry on for Free China, and one Secretary with an augmented Board of Directors to assist her, to remain and carry on for the invaded areas, the group of nurses appointed to serve on this augmented board being capable members in responsible positions in Shanghai Hospitals, where there was more freedom of movement. When the writer (being the last missionary nurse member of the Board of Supervisors at that time) was interned, there were still 60 hospitals with schools of nursing functioning in cities and towns that had been captured, from Peking in the north to Canton in the south.

Miss Revena Tien, the experienced Secretary who courageously agreed to stay in the Headquarters in Nanking had an exceedingly difficult time. The Japanese constantly tried to prove that the building was American property, thereby forcing the Secretary

out of the premises. Several times she had a painful experience of their questioning and examining proclivities, but her own brave and spirited attitude helped to bring her through. The deeds having been made out in the name of the Chinese nurses, the Japanese could not turn her out in the face of their own repeated assertions that legitimate Chinese work should be maintained. So the Secretary managed to retain her hold of the building and to carry on the work of the office. With postal communications destroyed she yet continued to keep in touch with the nurses, and sent letters, diplomas, etc., secretly on the persons of loyal friends from time to time.

As they were entirely cut off from the president in Chungking, Miss Tien and the Shanghai Board were obliged to take full responsibility for the 60 schools that still needed help. Every few months Miss Tien managed to make her way to the coast to see them and hold a Board meeting.

They did heroic work in maintaining the training and examination work for the student nurses where possible, and where the staff of the schools were loyal members of the Nurses' Association. They were all fine Christian women who believed in their Association motto "With God nothing is impossible."

Every Board meeting began with earnest prayer to Him who alone could lead and guide them in these terrible times and could protect the nurses for whom they were anxious. Fees could not be sent to Nanking and some schools were obliged to close down so that the income dwindled to nothing, and for some months there was no salary for the Secretary or for the upkeep of the office. The Shanghai group quickly raised money among themselves, and kept the work going determined to hold on till peace should come once again.

As the struggle grew deeper and more bitter, one after another of the hospitals had to close, some being destroyed by bombing, others being pressed to register and co-operate with the Japanese, closed down rather than do so. The 60 schools had dwindled to 24 by the time the Japanese surrendered. But during the eight years of war all student nurses who managed to complete their training in the war-ridden areas were able to take the proper examinations, and in most cases also to obtain diplomas. Examination papers and grades were sent long distances mostly by private endeavour which involved the taking of great risks and much self sacrifice.

Mrs. Edith Hsiao, the efficient Examination Secretary, did amazing work in this direction. When printing was no longer possible the papers for practical examinations were beautifully copied out by hand, entailing weeks of secret arduous work, so that all rules were kept, and everything about the war-time examinations met all



MISS REVENA TIEN, SECRETARY,
NURSES' ASSOCIATION OF CHINA.

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