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COMMUNITY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

DIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S

ST. CUTHBERT'S, TSOLO

NEWSLETTERS: ST. LUCY'S HOSPITAL 1939, 1958

(33)

THE MONTHLY LETTER

of the

Community of S. Mary the Virgin, Wantage.

S. Mary's Convent

Wantage

July, 1939

My dear Friends,

The following letters describe two medical visits in the neighbourhood of S. Cuthbert's, illustrating the conditions under which our Doctor-Sister is called to minister and bring relief.

"On the afternoon of Maundy Thursday a man came to the hospital to say his sister had been in labour for two days, and they wanted the doctor to come as they thought there was something wrong. Bransby (interpreter) and I set off on foot as it was quite away from the road. He led me by the shortest route, threading our way among kraals, through a bog, then through a stream with very steep banks which I had to scramble up, and finally reached our destination under Red Hill, panting. It was a very poor christian kraal, the sole light being a hole about 10 ins. by 6 ins. with a wooden shutter, and the only furniture of the hut a form on which I spread out the bottles, instruments etc. The patient was an old weaving school girl who was married last year, she was lying on a sack on the floor looking very frightened. As she could speak English I sent Bransby home as I knew he wanted to go to Evensong. Ordinary measures helped things, and as dark fell my girl was born. Not till then did I realize I was dealing with a case of twins, and the women (there is *always* an audience on these occasions) were delighted when I told them, clapping their hands and making many ejaculations, for twins are considered very lucky here. Except for a large torch I had taken with me, the only light was one candle, which guttered

badly as the various visitors came and went. There was a long interval before the second child arrived, and I was much relieved when at last a second baby girl appeared, and all was well. No preparation had been made for *one* baby, let alone two, and the poor little mites were wrapped in bits of old blue print — an old discarded apron. But if they had no warm clothes they did have a warm welcome, for many arms were held out eagerly to receive them. It is lovely to see that these women are so fond of babies. Then I gave Emma, (the sister-in-law of the patient) instructions as to when she was to give her some pills I wanted her to have, and got the patient to go over it again in si-Xosa to make sure she understood. Before I left we knelt together, and christians and heathen all united in saying 'Bawo Wetu' (Our Father) then Emma led us in prayer, beginning in a hushed voice, and working up to a climax with a great crescendo, and then dying away again to a whisper at the end, as is their way. What a wonderful gift of extempore prayer they have — they could pray for an hour on end without pause! As I said goodbye we shook hands all round, and I said 'Now Emma, are you sure you understand what you are to do with those pills?' 'Oh yes Doctor, I am to give one to one baby, and the other to the other, in the morning'! Collapse of the doctor, so all the explanations had to begin again. Two lads were sent to lead me home, which was good, as there was a very thick mist and I'd no idea which way to turn. The grass was soaking, and by the time we were half way home my habit was heavy with damp, and I could pour water out of my sandals. The Paschal Moon tried to peep out from behind a cloud to show the way; and we reached hospital at 11 p.m.

The other call was to a red kraal at Nomhala. Two heathen men came at 11 p.m. to take me. I called Nurse Nosiga to go with me as interpreter, and we set off in the car with the two messengers in the back. On the way they told us the woman had had her baby in the evening but had

hemorrhage and was almost unconscious. After a few miles along a road which I know well we turned off on to the veldt and they directed us along a foot track; then we left the car and walked up a rocky mountain-side to a kraal perched like an eagle's nest. The hut was full of people — all heathen, in red blankets, four or five men, half a dozen women and children, all huddled together with that dejected hopeless look on their faces which they have when they feel there is nothing to be done.

On the other side of the hut lay the patient all by herself — just a little heap of ochred blanket, and under it a girl of about twenty, cold, pulseless, bleeding desperately. She was all but dead so I took the risk and did the kind of thing one does in a hospital only with the most aseptic precautions — then gave her an injection — and waited. Gradually the bleeding stopped and nurse and I tried to get her comfortable. She was lying with half her body on sharp gravel; the native way of dealing with anything that should not be there is to cover it. We asked for water and they gave us thin mud! but we did get them to warm up some porridge and nurse fed her with a few spoonfuls to warm her up before we left. The two messengers saw us back to the car and I made them get in and take us back to the road. We got into thick mist and lost the track several times 'We are afraid, we want to go home now' said they. 'So am I, you're going to take us to the road first' I replied, and so they did. We got home at 2 a.m. Next day a messenger came to say the girl was much better and could sit up without fainting.

We visited her a few days later, it seemed almost a miracle she should have made such a good recovery; she was in the hut all alone with her baby when we arrived; but relations had seen us coming and they dropped in one by one. They were all most friendly and the girl says she is now my patient and is coming to hospital for her next baby. The red mother was quite a character and told us how annoyed she'd been

with her husband that night for insisting on sending for the doctor — 'it was waste of money — of course the girl was going to die' and so on . . . And she enjoyed the laugh against herself, as she'd been mistaken that time.

Oh it's *good* to be here and to be allowed to do tiny little things like this to help these people. Thank you for sending me!"

One of our dearest and oldest Sisters passed to her rest on S. Barnabas' Day. Sister Kate Agnes was in her ninety-fifth year but had kept all her faculties to the end. Since 1883 had devoted her loving service to S. Faiths, Lostwithiel, Sister Anna's foundation known in Cornwall as "the Mercy House" and "the Mercy Maidens". A friend of many years writes :

"I wonder whether even in the Community's wonderful records, such unswerving loyalty and simple, selfless service as hers has been surpassed. I think of those wonderful years at Lostwithiel after Sister Anna had become so deaf, when Sister Kate Agnes shouldered such difficult responsibilities so lovingly and faithfully, never looking anything but happy, never too busy to be friendly. I was at that time 'growing up', and you can guess how interested I was in the Sisters and girls of S. Faith's. The impressions gained then made Wantage very dear to me, though life has given me few opportunities of showing it visibly.

All this is said very feebly, but I am feeling deeply thankful for Sister's prayers and friendship and example, and for the Community, whose spirit she so perfectly expressed."

Sister's "children" and "grand-children" kept in touch with her to the end. She never lost her childlike freshness of heart and countenance or her loving welcome to old and young.

At a Clothing on June 9th two Novices received the Habit, whose names in Religion are Irene Kristin and Susan Dominica.

Yours sincerely in our Blessed Lord,

* Annie Louisa,

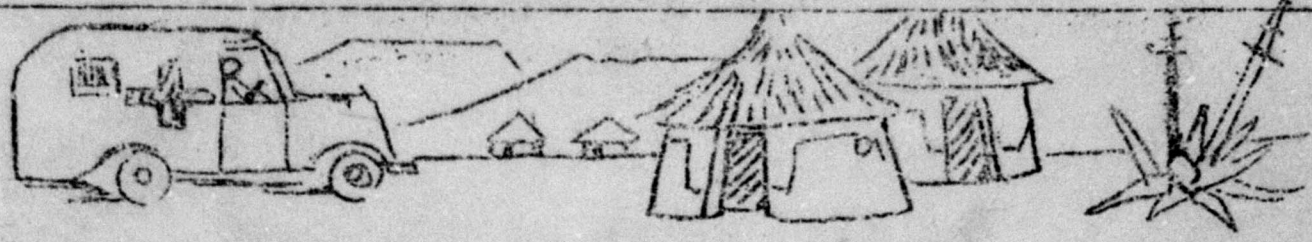
Mother General.

NEWSLETTER of St. LUCY'S HOSPITAL

TSOLO



at St. Cuthbert's Mission



1958

St. Lucy's Hospital

September 1959

Dear Friends,

I must apologise for the delay in issuing this number of the Magazine, but it is due to the fact that Dr. Phyllis Fleury who was the main source of inspiration behind the venture, has now left us. She is now at Lovedale Hospital at Alice, which is in the Cape. At the moment there is no Medical Superintendent here, but we are hoping that one will be appointed soon.

The Jubilee Celebrations which were mentioned in our last number went off very well. We started the day with a Pontifical High Mass which was followed by a giving meeting, presided over by the Bishop, at which £123 was collected, a very princely sum when one considers that the average daily pay for a labourer and a domestic servant is 2/6. There was a feast at mid-day and then a "concert" in which the nurses and representatives of the two girls' hostels on the Mission presented songs, dances and sketches.

Another event which has occurred in the last three months is the death of Frank Corner, a name well-known to friends of the St. Cuthbert's Mission.

He first came here to take over the school but after a short while he handed that over and started the Post Office, where he worked for most of his mission life. Apart from that he helped to build the Church and to plant gardens in the Mission. In all he did, he was an inspiration of Christian service to us who come after. His last years, when his physical strength failed were spent in the European ward of our Hospital, and here his keen enjoyment of everyday Mission affairs and his spiritual wisdom were an integral part of the Hospital. We miss his figure on the stoep outside his room, but we are not sorry that he has gone, for he wished to enter into the reward of his labours.

We have had snow for two week-ends in September. It has not fallen on the Mission, but the mountains behind have been white and very beautiful. One of the characteristics of the weather here is the sharp temperature swing and during the week-end between the two, the sun was blazing and it was too hot to sit in the sun to watch St. Cuthbert's Day Sports.

We notice the difference of weather at the Hospital, as the sun brings the Out-patients and the In-patients who are up sit outside, gossiping with visitors and Out-patients. On the other hand, cold weather means a slack Out-patient Department, for who would leave the comparative warmth of a kraal to walk a mile or two along muddy lanes, dressed in blankets which are quite inadequate to keep one dry and warm? At the Hospital, all the patients stay in bed, and I feel very cruel if I have to ask one to emerge in order that I can listen to his chest. At times like these, one longs for the central heating of an English Hospital.

In spite of the variable weather, the Mission looks as beautiful as ever. The Hospital garden is a mass of flowers and the orange and peach trees are coming into blossom. The new season's roses are flowering, although the last of the preceding year's only faded a month before the first of this year's appeared. So it is with hospital life. One job is finished or one person leaves, but there is immed-

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ately a new job to be done and a new person arrives to do it. So please pray for us and our needs: a Medical Superintendent, more Sisters and above all, Grace for our work.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Hicks

**Extract of Sermon preached at the
funeral of Frank Cornner.**

"Study to show thyself approved of God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed"
2 Tim. 2. 15

Over 60 years ago, at the end of afternoon school, the headmaster could often be seen here, shaping stones for the walls of this Church. Cutting stones is hard, slow work but Frank Cornner was not afraid of work and it was he who in his spare time worked with his own hands to build this lovely

church of ours. And now his body rests within the walls which he himself helped to put up so many years ago.

Frank Cornner was born on April 2nd, 1872, just ten years before the burning of Bishop Kov's house at St. Augustine's during the Pandomisi War, resulted in the site for the proposed mission being altered to St. Cuthbert's.

As a little boy, Frank Cornner can have had little time for play, for he went to work at twelve years and worked for the same firm for the next eight years before moving to Leicester.

Although he started work each day at 6 a.m. and finished at 6 p.m., these long hours were not enough for him and so he borrowed a garden to grow vegetables. By selling these, he was able to earn money for his clothes and other things.

But all this was merely the preparation for the other work which God had for His "workman", and so it next happened that Fr. Ley who had been

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