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COMMUNITY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

DIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S

ST. CUTHBERT'S, TSOLO

~~SISTER~~ ST. LUCY'S HOSPITAL: NOTES BY SISTER BENIGNA MARY

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Sister Benigna Lacey's notes on the Origin of
St. Lucy's Hospital in its relation to C.S.M.V.

When the first Sisters C.S.M.V. went to
S. Cruz de la Sierra in 1908 we found that our
nearest doctor lived at Trébol, a distance of
10 miles, and that he was not always
available as he had a large district under
his care. People living round about the
Mission had been in the habit of going
to Luisa Polity for simple remedies, or to
have sores dressed, & when we took
over the work, we had frequent requests
from outside for treatment, as well as
the responsibility for the health for our
boarders and others resident amongst us.
Occasionally there was brought to us a sick
child who on arrival was found to be
too ill to go home again, & we had
to find accommodation for such in the girls'
hostel. This was somewhat of a risk as we
had no qualified nurse amongst us & we
were soon glad to accept the offer of
Luisa Sechmora to come out & take charge
of such medical work as it was necessary
for us to do in the absence of a doctor.
This however could be only a temporary
measure, & when we had been at

S. Cuthbert's about 2 months I sounded the District Surgeon privately as to the need for a hospital on the Mission. Mr. Melville warmly welcomed the suggestion that we should make a move in the matter, promising to help us in any way possible if the plan should materialize. I then spoke to Father Puller about it and wrote with his approval to Mother Sney stating the need.

Mother Sney took up the matter warmly - wrote offering to collect funds for a hospital & with Fr. Puller's sanction set the scheme in brain.

I had previously, on our arrival at S. Cuthbert's acquainted the Mother General with the status of our work here, - which was novel to me as it differed greatly from our position in India where I had previously worked.

I pointed out that whereas in India we put up our own buildings, managed our own works and controlled their finances, - at S. Cuthbert's the buildings were regarded as Diocesan property, the Fathers were responsible for the works, & all monies passed through their hands, so that we were working.

not with them as in India but under
their direction. This I felt to be inevitable
in the case of the then existing works,
& I pointed out to our Mother that the
circumstances of S. Cathcart's were so unique
that I did not think our work there
could ever be carried on quite on the
same lines as in other parts of the world.
The Priest-in-Charge was the real Headman
of the location, he was responsible to
the magistrate as well as to the Bishop
for the lands held by the Mission: nothing
of importance was done without being
at least brought before the Mission "Bunga"
(Council of native men) & every event of
interest in the life of the Mission was
reported to the quarterly meeting of
workers from the whole parish which is
a large body of influential persons.
Nothing ever seemed to be done without
publicity; everything must be "talked" and
I saw that in this & in other ways there
did not seem to be much likelihood of our
ever being able to keep our work
strictly within the jurisdiction of our own
Community in consultation with the Parish
Priest as is our custom elsewhere! However,

There was such a family feeling on the Mission, that I thought we could as a Community, adapt ourselves to the unusual conditions provided that we used much tact in dealing with them. Mother Sney entered into all this with her usual large-hearted generosity, & agreed that we must be content to be somewhat elastic in entering upon fresh work in abnormal circumstances; but when it was decided that our Community should undertake to build a hospital & supply the nursing staff - although I do not know what she wrote to Fr. Puller on the subject - I feel sure our Mother expected that we should be allowed a greater measure of responsibility for S. Sney's than we had had in other Departments. I too was led to expect this; for I was practically given a free hand in the building. The plan accepted was mine (only corrected to scale by Mr. Thwaites;) Mother Sney sent me the funds for building and I personally arranged the details with the builder. When the Hospital was ready Mother Sney sent out a Sister as Matron and engaged a nurse for us, Miss Seehmura being obliged to return home.

The original idea was that we should have no resident doctor at first, but that Dr. Lavelle, the District Surgeon should pay one or two visits weekly to the hospital, & come over whenever he was specially sent for. It was not until the hospital was nearly completed that Dr. Lavelle offered himself through S.S.I.E. as resident Medical Officer, & was accepted. From the first he was naturally responsible for his work to the Fr. Superior, who paid him his salary, the bulk of which was originally a special grant if I remember rightly, from the S.P.C.K., but I cannot be quite certain where it came from. For some years our Community supplemented this with a subscription of £25. per ann. which came to me but I invariably gave this to the Fr. Superior, and not direct to the doctor. The nurses were in a different position, they have all along been engaged by the Mother General or by myself, their salaries and their length of service have been arranged between them and our Community and our right to do this was never questioned till

a hope that the appointment of the Board would not affect the relation of our Community to the Hospital & enquiring whether it could still be considered in a special way one of our works. Fr. Callaway replied in writing reminding me of the peculiar organization of all the work at S. Cuthbert's but stating that we could in spite of this reckon S. Sney's amongst our works. I naturally reported to Mother Sney each step as it was proposed, and she made no objection.

The Advisory Committee. When the Hospital was opened Mother Sney arranged with Lucia Trajendie to form a Society (Sisters with S. Sney's) which should undertake to collect £200 per ann: towards a Maintenance Fund. Later on the Tolo Magistrate applied to the Transkeian Territories Native District Council for a grant-in-aid to supplement the support received from home and this was given. I think it was then that Fr. Callaway suggested an Advisory Committee in addition to the Board. He thought this might bring in more outside interest and

any possible
disarm, suspicion. All the ~~member~~ Ministers of
Religion in the Tolo District were amongst
the members of the Committee and the
District Council was invited to send
two members.
None of the internal affairs of the Hospital
were ever, so far as I can remember,
discussed either by the Board or by
the Committee. Their function as far as
outside members were concerned, was
to bring in the opinion of business
men on points about which advice
might be required in the early days of
the medical work. The Board prepared
the Agenda for the Committee a discussion
took place on such matters as to whether
Swiss goats would be a good investment
during the time of cattle sickness; whether
donkeys should be used for transport during
the same period; whether a coffee shop
should be opened on the Mission to provide
food for friends of out-patients; whether
free patients should be required to
bring a certificate of poverty from the
Magistrate and so on. For the last
few years the Board and the Advisory
Committee have been in abeyance, presumably

because there has been nothing to consult them about.

During this period also there has been a tendency to withdraw recognition of the Sisters share of responsibility for the hospital. When efforts were first being made to find a doctor to replace Dr. Luc. Turcotte I wrote to the Mother General that Fr. Ley thought S. Lucy's should not be included in published lists of C.S.M.V. works, lest the impression should be given that any doctor applying for the post would be working under our Community.

I think I suggested that the words "S. Lucy's Hosp: Nursing Department" should be inserted in our lists but I do not know whether this was done.

About 2 years ago it was decided that the money for maintenance collected by Miss Turcotte should no longer be sent to me but that it should be forwarded to Father Ley through Miss Booker's Office, so that the Sister Superior now has no hold upon the funds, none of them passing through her hands.

~~About 2 years ago~~. The nursing had also passed into Miss Wolfe's hands and it seemed evident that our Community

would lose control of the Hosp: altogether unless a Sister could be supplied to take charge of the nursing. I therefore applied last year for a second Sister for S. Suez's and received from the Mother General a promise of Sr. Rosemary who has now taken over the nursing Department - Sr. Ellen Clemany keeping her post as Sister in Charge.

To sum up - S. Suez's Hosp: has not the same status in relation to our Community as is held by our works in other parts of the world, but we are definitely responsible for the nursing and for the general well-being of the in-patients' Department, also for the greater part of the finance of that Department; and the fact that we had permission to dedicate the Hospital to Mother Suez's patron Saint and that our Associates built the Chapel in memory of her is a standing witness to the close connection of the C.S.M.V. with S. Suez's.

+ Benigna Mary C.S.M.V.
(Copied by Sr. Euphemia)
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