Miss Johanne Henrietta Christensen, R. N.

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IN MEMORIAM

Miss Johanne Henrietta Christensen.

Johanne Henrietta Christensen was born at Aalborg Denmark, May 22, 1881, of earnest Christian parents. Her father was in the State Railway Department and her mother a devoted worker in many Christian causes, notably, service to Danish war orphans in a province ceded by Denmark to Germany many years ago; in recognition of which Mrs. Christensen was presented with two handsome vases of Danish China, made especially for this occasion.

When Johanne was ready to be confirmed in the Danish Lutheran Church she received from the pastor a double course of religious instruction, covering a period of a full year instead of the regular six months' course. After completing the course of study in Danish schools, Miss Christensen took a course in massage and then in physical education. Her first separation from home was at the time she accepted a position as teacher of gymnastics in an English boarding school for girls, where she was trained to impart what she had received.

Returning to Denmark she took full training as a nurse. Her first interest in foreign missions was aroused, when her most intimate friend who had been with her in training and work, married a missionary and went to Iceland. Miss Christensen experienced genuine grief at this separation and she decided to leave Denmark and take a post graduate course at Bellevue Hospital in New York. Soon after this, Dr. L. D. Bulkley, a prominent friend of foreign missions was seeking a nurse to cooperate with his son in the isolated station of Trang, Thailand. He applied to Bellevue Hospital for help. He was directed to Miss Christensen who was then doing private nursing. It was not easy for her to decide to throw in her lot with American missionaries for she had had but little contact with Americans, but we can see now that she was truly guided by our Lord, to come to Thailand.

Miss Christensen was appointed by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and sent to Thailand where she arrived on Christmas

Day 1911. Then began her work in the hospital and the little church of Trang and she sometimes accompanied Dr. and Mrs. E. P. Dunlap on their tours, always glad to profit by their guidance and their evangelistic example.

Afterward she was put in charge of the hospital at Pitsanuloke during the absence of the doctor on furlough. From Pitsanuloke she returned to Trang with her first helper, whom she trained for service. This young woman became a Christian and is now doing independent work in Khon Kaen.

Miss Christensen spent all of her furloughs getting intensive training in medical work, of one line or another. During her first furlough she was awarded her midwifery certificate from a London hospital. Then she gained a vision of training Christian midwives to serve in the provinces of Thailand. In 1923 with the approval of the Mission she came to Bangkok to open a center for training young women for this work. Her aim was always evangelistic hoping that the midwives might be trained in Christian work as well, that they might carry a strong evangelistic message with them, as the Lutheran deaconesses are trained to do.

Among the many instances of her kind thoughtfulness was one which resulted in the coming of one of her most valued workers. Thinking often of old friends of Trang she decided to send to the Trang church a picture of their beloved Dr. E. P. Dunlap. Before the Church service, Elder Dean was asked to make the presentation speech. On seeing the picture he was so moved by the striking likeness of his dear missionary father that he could speak only through tears. At the close of the service he was asked if his daughter (Maa Saguan) might go to Bangkok for Bible Training. He consented at once saying that he could not withold her from the Lord, for the evangelistic work begun by Dr. Dunlap must go on.

Maternity Home records show success that is marvellous. Abnormal cases have been made normal and the loss has been but one mother in 1200. So the work bears witness as to what a saving of life and health can be accomplished where lives are entrusted to the loving care

of skilled Christian women who work unmindful of self in the name of the Master. Due to the increase in the number of patients, Miss Christensen felt impelled to bid for the rental of two near-by houses in the process of construction, for dispensary and clinic rooms and her own residence. In spite of poor buildings and lack of equipment, the ingenuity of the workers is such that never once have the standards of cleanliness and efficient care been lowered.

Soon she established semi-weekly clinics for bookings, examinations, consultations, and instructions for young parents, also a nursery for delicate children, as well as rooms equipped for the delivery and care of mothers and babies where they are kept a fortnight, and dismissed with strength and wisdom to go on with health in their own homes, carrying with them the message of the Christian friends who care so tenderly for them. The students of the Women's Bible Training School were trained also at the Maternity Home in midwifery. They were given a great course in cleanliness, order, promptness, and accuracy, keeping records, caring for patients in their homes, and following up babies as they grew older.

Her work was always in close cooperation with Second Church. She sponsored Bible classes and Christian Endeavor meetings in her home doing everything possible to make the room convenient and comfortable for them. She had the nurses taught hymn-playing so that they could help the Church. She gave wise counsel to the Church session and good cooperation in visiting the Church members and made a great contribution when acting as treasurer helping with true business ability. The Maternity Home became a gathering place where patients and nurses liked to come back for instruction, and social life, tea-parties, musicals, and Christmas celebrations, prayer-meetings, King's Daughters' gatherings, or just friendly calls, bringing often contributions of fruit, flowers, cakes, or cloth just because they wanted to beautify a place that had done so much for them.

Miss Christensen gave her life unstintedly that other women might bring up their families in comfort and health. She continued her unselfish labors until a cancer of the brain sapped her strength.

The nurses she had trained, cared for her devotedly until she was taken to McCormick Hospital in Chiengmai where everything possible was done until she peacefully passed away, November 7, 1939.

Miss Christensen — What is our memory of her?

We think of her as the embodiment of sympathy for us in our pain, strength and efficiency in caring for illness, thoughtfulness for the needs of others, endurance of her own pain without complaining, vision for enlargement of her work, truth and sincerity in urging her helpers to do what is right.

Yes, all that is included in these terms:—
sympathy, strength, efficiency, thoughtfulness, endurance, vision, and truth.

Whenever we think of Miss Christensen we shall think of "Peace." During her last illness, she said, "Mrs. Fuller has just been talking beautifully about peace. Did I ever tell you about the time I was confirmed in the Church in Denmark? It seemed to me for many days that I was walking in a great light and my heart was filled with peace; and so often out here as I have used my hands in helping the women it has seemed that the Hands of the Lord were close supporting my hands and He was near. Often as I work without speaking my heart can keep praying." So it seemed fitting that the last hymn she heard was when Mrs. Hanna sang to her, "When peace like a river attendeth my soul, It is well with my soul, it is well."

BANGKOK

Personnel

Many changes in the personnel of the station have taken place during the year. Rev. and Mrs. Forrest Travaille and Miss Barbara McKinley, welcome recruits from America, arrived last January and have been assigned to work in Bangkok. Later in the year, Miss Virginia Herst came to fill the position of director of the Home-making Department at Wattana Wittaya Academy. Several members of the station have returned from furlough; — Dr. and Mrs. E. M. Tate, Rev. and Mrs. Allen Basset, Rev. and Mrs. A. G. Seigle, Miss Alice Ellinwood and Rev. and Mrs. P. A. Eakin. Miss Faye Kilpatrick left on furlough in July. Mr. W. J. Sinclair Thompson returned to take up his teaching at the Bangkok Christian College after spending one and a half years in the Prince Royal's College, Chiengmai. During their language study Miss Fox and Mr. Ryburn were located in Bangkok.

The loss caused by the death of Miss J. Christensen has been a very serious one to Bangkok Station and to the Maternity Home, of which she had been the founder and director for many years. The entire mission deeply regrets the passing of this efficient and consecrated missionary.

Evangelistic.

First Church at Samray is struggling through a very difficult period. It has not had a regular pastor since Kru Yuan, the first ordained pastor in Bangkok, died several years ago. Several Christian leaders go in to help conduct the Sunday services, but the church needs real pastoral care.

Second Church shared with the Chinese Baptist Group the special evangelistic services held in that church a year ago. Following these meetings ten new members were added to the membership of the church. Two of these were lepers, and with the help of the Chinese Church were able to go to our Mission Leprosaria for treatment.