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# DOCTOR IDA

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By  
**SHEILA SMITH**  
*Author of the Dinner Party*

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*True Stories of real people*  
**DOCTOR IDA S. SCUDDER**

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**DOCTOR IDA**

The door of the big bedroom opened, and in each cubicle there was a scuffle as its owner scrambled hastily into bed. Miss Tomkins was doing her nightly round.

"Now, girls ! All in bed ?"

"Yes, Miss Tomkins," breathed eight dutiful voices.

"Everythings all right ?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Tomkins"

"Good, Now - don't let me hear another word from you tonight. I've had enough nonsense lately from Room III. Do you understand ?"

"Yes, Miss Tomkins."

"Ida-do you hear me ?"

"Yes, Miss Tomkins" the voice was the meekest of the lot, but Miss Tomkins did not look really convinced.

"Very well, then." she said at last. "Good - night, girls."

"Good - night, Miss Tomkins."

The door closed, and for at least thirty seconds there was no sound but the distant whistle of the Boston Mail as it sped past through the night. Then the bed in the window cubicle creaked as someone vigorously sat up.

"Now then !" Ida Scudder's brisk young voice rang out.

"What subject is Room III discussing tonight ?"

Seven voices burst out simultaneously.

"Why basketball's a better game \_"

"Why Tonky's hair is such a \_"

"Who'll win the next mach \_"

"No, no, no !" The president thumped her pillow firmly.

"We settled it last night. What was it, Flo ?"

"What we're all going to do when we grow up."

"Oh yes. Come on, then. Who's to speak first ?"

"Go on, Ida ! You begin !"

"Well\_" Ida leaned back in her bed and her voice grew dreamy. "I shall lie in bed till noon every day, looking at my letters and drinking coffee and reading novels. After lunch I'll go driving, or I might play tennis. And at night, every single night, I'll go to parties, and I won't come home till three o'clock any morning."

"Pooh !" came Flo's scornful voice. "You won't do any of it. You'll be a missionary like your parents."

Ida sat up again abruptly. "Don't you dare say that to me!" she cried. "I won't ! I tell you I won't."

"It might be quite fun," said one of the others in a soothing tone.

"Fun !" Ida's eyes blazed. "I guess you just don't know any thing about it. D'you know" her voice quietened, and a note of distress came into it\_ "When I was only six I used to help feed children who were dying of starvation in the great famine. I had to break up the bread and put it in their mouths because they were too weak to do it themselves." Shudders came from the other cubicles. "Yes, I did. And I've seen babies lying dead in the streets, and men crawling through the bazaar with their hands stretched out like claws-ugh! I'm sick of India. Besides, there are too many missionaries in our family already. I'm going to stay here in America. I'm going to have lots of fun, and marry someone rich, and enjoy life."

"That's it!" cried Flo. "Tell you what - let's all marry bankers in New York City, and all have house in the same street, and we'll shop together in the mornings, and every night we'll have\_"

"Sssssh ?" A piercing hiss came from the cubicle nearest the door.

It was too late. The door opened again, and in a very short time Miss Tomkins had stopped Rooms III's discussions for one night at least.

But she could not check their thoughts: and Ida, before she went to sleep, said once more to herself, whispering the words in the darkness, "I won't be a missionary; I won't ! I won't !".

But by the time she had reached her final term at Northfield she knew she would have to return to India at least for a time, for her mother was ill and needed her badly. "It won't be for long." She assured Florence. "I'll stay with Mother as long as she needs me; then I'll come back to the States, and we'll have fun."

So off she went to the thatched mission bungalow in the obscure little South Indian town, and did her best to get her mother better. The sooner that was done, the sooner she could go back to America. That was her only thought; until one night she had a three - fold encounter.

She was at her desk, answering letters from America. With a homesick sigh she put down one that was particularly full of parties and ball - games and excitement, and set herself to explain to the young gentleman, who had written it, just why she couldn't immediately return to join in the fun, when on the veranda outside she heard footsteps.

She went out, to find a tall Brahmin facing her with troubled eyes. "Amma," he said bowing his head over his folded hands in greeting. "Please could you come with me and help my wife?"

"What is the matter?"

"She is only a child - younger than you, Amma. She is ill, very ill, and the midwife can do nothing. Oh, I entreat you to come."

Ida drew back and shook her head. "But I don't know anything. My father is a doctor - I'll fetch him."

The man drew himself up in outraged pride. "Your father'... A man to look after my wife! Never. She had better die."

"But - oh, you can't say that !" Ida was aghast. She reasoned with him and argued with him. She took him to her father's study, and together they tried to persuade him, but he stood firm.

"Not a man," he said. "Never! It is unthinkable. But if only Missy Amma -". His eyes sought hers again, pleading.

She shook her head. "But I know nothing. There's nothing I could do."

With a hopeless shrug he turned away, and went back into the night with his message of despair. Ida, troubled and depressed, returned to her letters and did her best to concentrate on them.

In a few minutes she heard footsteps again, and ran out onto the veranda, hoping that he had changed his mind and come back for her father. But at the door she stopped and her face fell; it was a different man, a Muslim in a long, white coat.

"Madam," he said coming towards her. "I am here to ask your help."

"Yes?" She replied, hoping that this time it was something she could do. "What is it?"

"Madam, my wife - forgive me for troubling you, but she is dying; could you come to her? The midwife has done all she can - and I know no one else."

Her heart sank, and she shook her head without speaking. Then she beckoned him into the house. "It's my father who's the doctor." She said. "Come and see him."

"Your father, Madam? But I must ask you to remember that no man outside our family has ever seen my wife's face. How can you suggest it? I came here to ask a woman's help, not a man's."

"But I can't" she cried. "I would if I could - I just can't Oh, won't you let my father come?"

But he too went off alone, and this time Ida had not the heart even to think of writing letters. She picked up a book and tried to forget her surroundings; all the time her ears were alert; she was hoping against hope that one of the men would come back.

Again came footsteps, again she ran out; but was disappointed. It was a third man, high - caste Hindu, and as he saw her stooped and touched her feet.

"Amma !" he cried, raising beseeching eyes to hers, "I implore you to come with me. You must help!"

"It's not -" she cried backing away from him. "It is not your wife?"

"Yes." He stood up, staring at her, "How did missy Amma know?"

"Oh, never mind that. But, see here, If she's ill, won't you let my father come and see her? He's a doctor. He's very clever." Breathlessly she watched his face.

"No, Missy Amma," He shook his head. "Not a man. But you - you will come?"

She was almost in tears. "But I can't I don't know anything. There's nothing I could do."

He looked at her pathetically. "Nothing ?"

"Nothing"

With a hopeless gesture he turned away into the night, and she fled indoors and threw herself down on her bed. All that night she lay awake. Three girls, only her own age, dying for lack of a woman doctor! Staring wide - eyed into the darkness. She knew unmistakably that God was calling her to fill this dreadful gap. She knew it but her heart said, "No! No! No!" She didn't want to spend her life in India. She wanted to go back to America, to have friends, to marry, to be free and happy and light - hearted.

As the dawn came up, she heard in the distance the dull rhythm of drums. She knew well enough what they meant, but to be certain she sent a servant to the village. He came back to say that all three girls had died in the night.

She shut the door and returned to the struggle. It was God's will or her own. She fought and fought, but at last she gave in. For the first time in her life she was realizing that God has got to come first. By midday she emerged and went in search of her parents.

"I must tell you first," she said. "I want to go to America and study medicine, and then come back and help the women here."

"My dear," said her mother, "We're proud."

So back she went to America after all, and all the energy and exuberance that might have been spent in having a good time went into making herself the very best doctor possible.

As her course drew to a close, the folk back in India began to plan how to use the coming recruit. She was told that she will be allowed to open a hospital for women, all her own, in the small town of Vellore, ninety miles inland from Madras.

First, however, the money had to be found. When her final examination had been taken, the mission board of the Dutch Reformed Church sent her out on a campaign to raise eight thousand dollars, "Why not fifty thousand?" protested Ida characteristically. No, said the board firmly. "Be sensible, Eight thousand is all you can possibly manage."

It seemed they were right, for she had far more difficulty than she had expected. The date of her sailing drew nearer and nearer, and even a mere eight thousand seemed unprocurable. But right until the last moment she went on working.



The Saturday night before she sailed she had almost given up hope. "Why don't you try Miss Taber, who lives down the street?" asked the friend with whom she was staying. "She has lots of influence. She might arrange a meeting at her church, where you could make an appeal."

Ida's blue eyes gleamed again, and her chin went up, "Sure," she said. "I'll try, Where is it?" And off she went down the road to number 41.

The maid showed her up to a sitting - room where a woman sat with an elderly man.

"Miss Taber? How do you do? I'm Dr. Scudder."

"How do you do? This is my brother-in-law, Mr. Schell. You want to talk to me? Perhaps you had better come through here."

She went ahead into a library, leading out of the sitting-room, and there Ida did all she could to make Miss Taber feel and see the need of India's women. She besought her to arrange a meeting as soon as possible, and her enthusiasm prevailed. Miss Taber agreed, and a smiling Ida emerged into the drawing-room, said good night to Mr. Schell, and went back to her packing.

Next morning, she found a note by her breakfast plate, addressed in a fine, old-fashioned hand. She opened it curiously. "Mr. Schell wants to see me. "She said to her friend in surprise. "I wonder what he wants ? Do you think" she hesitated; disappointed so often, she hardly dared to put her thought into words.

Her friend had no such misgivings. "He's going to give you something for your hospital!" She cried, "I'm sure he is. Why, Ida, he's rich - very rich. I wonder how much he'll give. A hundred dollars? Five hundred? He could afford it easily"

"Steady on!" laughed Ida. "We don't know yet that he is going to give me anything."

But of course she hoped. At the appointed time she went off again to the house down the road, and for half an hour the old gentleman questioned her narrowly. What size town was Vellore? What were its medical facilities? It had a Government Hospital-then why build another? Patiently, eagerly, Ida told yet again of the women who would never visit a hospital run by men; he nodded slowly, and turned the questions on to herself-her plans, her qualifications, her aims.

At last, he was silent for a moment, then smiled at her "you are wanting eight thousand dollars, I believe?" She nodded. He turned to the desk behind him and produced a cheque-book from a drawer. "I am going to give you ten thousand," he said quietly. "I want that hospital to be named in honour of my late wife, Mary Taber Schell; it must be worthy of her." He smiled at Ida again as he dipped his pen in the ink. "Would ten thousand do, do you think?"

Would it do ! Ida never knew how she got back with the news to her friend's home. Only one thought marred her perfect joy as she told the story over and over again - "Why." She cried, "Why didn't they let me ask for fifty thousand?"

But the doctor had her hospital; that was sure. And when she landed in India a few weeks later - on January 1st, 1900, the very first day of the twentieth century - she was happy and triumphant. All seemed to be going very well.

Then came a blow that dashed her high spirits to pieces. Her father was seriously ill, and no treatment seemed to help him. "You must get better quickly, father," she encouraged him, trying not to show how anxious she felt. "I'm not experienced enough to work on my own. I'm only fit to be your assistant."

The building of the hospital was postponed for a while. Meanwhile, Ida set up a surgery in a tiny room in the old mission bungalow where she had lived as a child. Soon her fame spread. Low caste women began to swarm about her doors, while from the higher - caste came endless messages asking her to visit the women in their secluded homes. The room became too small. She took over the guest room and finally the whole house in the same compound was set aside for her. She was busy all day long, and if it had not been for her father's ill - health she would have been as happy as a queen. But her father became worse. At last the day came, five months after she had landed in India, when Ida was left to carry on her work alone. Besides her natural grief at her father's death, she had to battle with her inexperience. She had counted on her father's help, and without it she was, for the time, lost.

The day she attempted her first big operation she was terrified. Waiting for the patient to come round, she paced up and down the verandah with every nerve on edge. "If it isn't a success," she told her mother, "I'll never operate again. Never," But within a day or two the patient was sitting up on her bed, and before she was back in her home again Ida had tried her hand at two more operations.

Visiting the convalescent a week or so later, she found her way through the narrow street blocked at one point by a family who was dragging out all its household goods and loading them on to a bullock cart. Something about the speed and urgency of their movements struck her, and she paused to watch. Men and women alike were rushing to and fro with pots and rolls of bedding, their faces full of fear. She spoke to a man, who, like herself, stood watching. "Is anything the matter? Why are they leaving in such a hurry?" He did not answer - only glanced at her quickly with terrified eyes and made off down the street as if

suddenly anxious to be back at his own home. "What is it? What's the matter?" She besought the spectators. And then, in the confusion of their replies, she caught the dreaded word 'plague'. There is plague in the street. They are leaving while there is time."

Plague ! For months now she had seen accounts in the newspapers of its dreadful progress across India, killing hundreds of thousand on its way. Was it here now ? Here in Vellore ? Leaving her visit unmade, she turned and hurried to the Government Hospital. If plague really had come to Vellore, she and they together would have a fearful responsibility to bear.

As she turned into the bazaar, she heard the throb of drums and the cry of flutes, and had to press close to the side of the road for the passing of a long procession. At the front, men danced and wailed sweating in the heat of the sun, while the musicians thumped and piped behind them. Then came a huge crowd of all ages and sizes, young men and women, tiny children and bent old grandmothers. As they passed, Ida noticed that every person carried a gift of some sort-a garland of flowers here, and a little rice there, and now came a woman with a fowl and a man with a goat.

"Where are they going ?" she asked a shopkeeper.

"To the temple of Mariammal, the goddess of disease."

"But why are they taking animals? I know they sacrifice flowers and fruit to the gods-but not animals, surely?"

The man shrugged, and drew an expressive finger across his throat. "They will be killed. Mariammal loves blood."

"But animal sacrifice is forbidden."

"Not when trouble comes, Amma, Mariammal has sent the plague and she must be appeased - if blood is the only thing that can appease her, then blood must be shed. Better the blood of a goat than a child."

"But it's all so senseless, and so unnecessary now, when there are doctors in the town. We can get rid of the plague if we are given a chance; but Mariammal never will."

He shook his head. "Madam, you will be fortunate if you are given the chance."

She soon found out what he meant. She and the government doctors went from street to street, from house to house, to find the sick and take them away to the plague camp for treatment. But it was the hardest job in the world to find them, "None here-none here" - so every household declared. And then, when they searched the house they would find a young man or a child, desperately ill, hidden in a dark cupboard or under a pile of rags.

"Why did you lie to me?," Dr. Scudder cried the first time this happened. "why did you not want me to find him?"

One of the women fell at her feet in despair, "Because you will take him away - because we shall never see him again! Amma, Amma, let him die here. Don't take him away from us!"

So family after family hid their sick-and caught the infection themselves. Others decamped. One day a house would be swarming with life, then a child would develop the dreaded symptoms, and the next day all would be still and deserted - they had slipped away overnight to their ancestral village in the country, out of reach of the prying western doctors and their awkward questions. And with them had gone the plague, to infect yet another village and to spread still further, until in 1904 the last year of that epidemic, there were over a million deaths from plague in India.

Nowadays, these terrible outbreaks are on the wane. Occasionally, plague or cholera breaks out in an insanitary district, but inoculations, far from being feared, are now

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positively sought after, and the spread of the disease is soon checked.

In the days when the fair-haired Doctor Ida battled with the plague, it was an unrelenting fight. But each day she found time to slip up the side street where at long last the red walls of her hospital were rising. Week after week, month after month, the work continued. At last, in 1902, came the opening day. With garlands and speeches, and half the town in attendance, the **Mary Taber Schell Hospital for Women and Children** was declared open. Soon its red brick pillars looked down on a forecourt crowded with outpatients, and its forty beds were occupied. Even the verandah round the tree-filled courtyard was often full of patients lying on the floor, content with any corner if only they could get out from America to join Dr. Ida, also a hospital sister to undertake the training of nurses. So the little hospital's efficiency grew.

Moreover, it gave more than efficiency. One day an educated Brahmin came to consult Dr. Ida about his wife and daughter. They were emancipated women, with none of the usual prejudices against seeing men doctors, and Dr. Ida asked why they did not go to the government hospital. "Madam," he said, "we go to the government hospital for many things, but when we want sympathy we come to the missionaries."

Much of the work still lay in the patients' own homes, and was made doubly difficult by superstition and prejudice. Babies were born in the smallest and usually the darkest room, and no member of the family would help for fear of being 'contaminated'. Once Dr. Ida was called to a very serious case in a Brahmin home. She had to leave her carriage and walk of the last part of the way, for the Brahmins would not allow her low-caste groom in their street - his very shadow would, they believed, 'defile' them.

At the door, she was met by an old woman who took care to stand well away from her - for the doctor herself was an outcast in Brahmin eyes.

"Where is everyone else?" asked Dr. Ida.

"They have gone. The girl is so ill they were afraid of contamination."

"And you? Aren't you afraid?"

The widow smiled faintly. "I am unclean already because, I am a widow."

They went to the pitch-dark cupboard - for it was nothing else - where the patient lay, and Dr. Ida asked for boiled water in which to wash her hands. Standing conspicuously aloof the old woman said there was none.

"Then give me matches, and I'll boil some myself."

Unclean though she already was, the widow was not going to risk contact with the foreigner. She threw the matches to Dr. Ida from a distance, and even when the box flew open and spilled its contents she would not help to pick them up. Then Dr. Ida asked for a bundle of straw for the patient to lie on, and the woman threw her a small handful.

"But this isn't nearly enough. Please bring a big armful,"

"But if I do that, there won't be enough for the cow."

However, little by little the necessaries were thrown to Dr. Ida, and at last her job was done and the patient was comfortable. As she left the house, she smiled to see the unfortunate widow hastily pouring water to purify herself from her contact with a foreign outcaste.

But when the widow realized that she had a grandson through Dr. Ida's efforts, her opinion of the missionary rose. And a week or two later, as she passed the house, Dr. Ida was astonished when the old lady rushed out and clasped

both her hands in a loving embrace. Prejudice had been defeated at last.

All the time she was working for these sick town people, she could not forget the swarming thousands in the villages round about, out of reach of any medical help whatsoever. At last, she and her new colleagues determined that something must be done for them too took to driving out into the country once a week along a fixed route. Soon the word spread that the white women who drove that way so regularly were doctors, and could do wonderful things. All along the route little groups of people came to meet them, some of whom had walked miles across the baked brown fields in the shimmering heat.

One day, the patients saw coming along the road, not the usual pony - cart, but a monstrous, terrible creature. It had no horse or ox to pull it-it moved by itself, and the roar and rattle it made was terrifying. Too frightened even to see their dear doctor-Amma at its wheel, they gave a unanimous piercing shriek and fled in all directions. But next week they were back, hiding behind a tamarind tree and peering out. Soon the new motor car was familiar as the pony-cart had been.

The people would arrive long before the car was due, for not one among them had a watch, and they did not want to miss the doctor. Squatting on the ground beneath a peepul or a tamarind, they would while away the time until a cloud of red dust announced that the car was coming. Then they would gather in an interested circle, watching while Dr. Ida and her troop of assistants took out their boxes of instruments and drugs, and prepared for business.

"Leprosy patients this way," one nurse would call. (The word 'leper' is forbidden because it suggests degradation and uncleanness.) A decrepit crowd answered her call-some with no fingers, and some with fingers like bunches



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of diseased carrots - one with mere stumps of feet, on which he had stumbled more than a mile over the red dust of the fields. Leprosy needs long, long treatment and as the nurse injected one after another she knew that only a handful would have the patience needed for a complete cure. But for the sake of that handful, she too was patient, and injected all who came.

Another nurse would be dealing with eyes. There were children with conjunctivitis to be given drops; a boy with both eyes scarlet with trachoma; and four pathetic old souls with eyeballs glazing with cataract. "Come back with us to the hospital." The nurse would urge, "and there we can make you see again." They would hesitate, mutter among themselves, and at last perhaps one old body would have the courage to say, "I will come," and to climb up into the back seat of the car to be driven off.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ida herself would be operating, perhaps amputating a diseased toe, the woman lying unconscious on a cleancloth spread in the dust, while all around her would press the inquisitive crowd. Mopping the sweat from her brow, Dr. Ida would get down on her knees and stretch out a carefully sterilized hand for the instruments; a grubby toddler would knock against it, and patiently she would have to get to her feet and 'scrub up' all over again.

Often there were diversions. A bangle - seller would join the crowd, and some of the women would invest in his glittering wares, stretching out their arms while he eased the fragile circles over their hands. A wandering snake-charmer would receive treatment, and put on a show out of gratitude. Sometimes a village quack would set up in rivalry and try to cure some of the doctor's patients, only to be shouted down by the rest. At last all would be done, and the old car would start up, and off they would go to the next stopping - point. Often at the end of the day, hot,

exhausted, with dust in every pore and feet three sizes too big for her shoes Dr. Ida could claim that she had treated no less than three hundred persons.

It was on these roadside trips that the hospital collected its first male patients. The men of the villages were just as remote from medical care as the women, just as helpless and just as needy. So the 'roadside group' began to include among those they took back, an occasional man, perhaps with a broken leg, perhaps with an infected scalp-wound. Somewhere in the little red hospital a corner could be found for him.

But Dr. Ida was never satisfied. "You know," she said one day to the nursing sister, in a fit of gloom, "I sometimes wonder if we are doing any good at all. For every road we take out of the town, there are ten we have to ignore. For every village we visit there are a hundred we never see. For every patient we treat there are thousands who could be treated, if only we had more hands. It makes you feel that the little you can do is no good at all, when you think of all that you can do is no good at all, when you think of all the that you can't do."

"You can" take on any more "roadsides," said sister firmly. "So don't you suggest it."

"I know I can't. It's more assistants that we need."

"The nurses are very good." Protested sister; she had been training girls for six years, and was proud of other result.

"They are," Dr. Ida smiled. "My when I think of the sort of help I had to manage with when I came out first, I realize how much you've done. But -" she shook her head - "we want more than nurses; we want doctors."

"Any chance of few more? Why don't you write home, or to Britain?"

She shook her head. "Not a hope. Unless -" she

paused, a gleam in her eye.

"Unless - ?"

"Unless we trained our own."

"What ?" Sister nearly jumped out of her chair with shock. "But how could we? You're not serious?"

"I'm perfectly serious." And Dr. Ida began to unfold a dream that had been in her head for a long time. Girls were already studying at Madras Medical College. But what about Christian Medical College, a well - run institution where educated Christian girls could be trained in modern scientific medicine - was it really so impossible?

She did nothing in a hurry. For five years she pondered the daring idea, and discussed it with knowledgeable people. Then at last, in 1918, she went to the Surgeon - General in Madras and asked permission to go ahead.

He shook his head, trying not to smile at her rashness. "Dr. Scudder," he said, "You will be lucky if you can find three students who are even willing to try. If by any chance you can find six well, by all means go ahead." But shrug of his shoulders added more eloquently than any words. "Of course, you won't?"

However, Dr. Ida put out her advertisements and awaited results. A week or two passed, and nothing happened. Then at last came an application - and, moreover, one that sounded promising. Then another. In the end there were so many that she was able to pick and choose, and only take those girls who seemed both keen and intelligent.

Triumphantly, she reported to the Surgeon - General that preparations were going ahead. She rented a bungalow for a students' hostel with a squeeze it would hold the seventeen chosen ones. She hired a hall for a lecture room, put up a shed for dissections, and made arrangements with

a nearby men's college for lectured in chemistry. Then, with only a handful of books, a microscope and skeleton, the first term began.

The task of lecturing was divided among the doctors. Dr. Ida herself took the biggest share, and had to sit up night after night into the small hours, brushing up her anatomy and trying to bring her own knowledge up-to date before passing it on to the students. The girls, true pioneers, were as keen as mustard, and no work was too hard for them.

But medical training has unpleasant aspects. Before long one of the girls came to Dr. Ida in despair. "It's no use, Dr. Scudder. I can't go on. The bones and skeleton haunt me. I see them in bed at night, and I see them when I sit down for meals. I can't eat at all."

"Don't be silly, my dear. You'll get over it !"

"I shan't, I'm sure I shan't, I know what I'm like when I get a fear. I shall just have to give up and go home."

So off she went. But once she got home her conscience and her relatives - rebuked her. She wrote penitently, asking to return.

"Please may I come back ?"

"You may return," Dr. Ida wrote, "but only if you promise to settle down and behave."

The promise was given and she went back. For weeks after that this student was the first to offer for any unpleasant job., though always with a leaf over her nose as a precaution. And by the end of her course she was very useful, for whenever new students were tempted to cowardice, she was sent for to encourage them with her example.

Another difficulty was food. In India, there are time-honoured traditions, about what may and may not be eaten, any they differ from religion to religion and from caste to

caste. With Christian, Hindu and Muslim students living together, things sometimes became awkward. In the end, Dr. Ida told the housekeeper to divide the students into their different food-classes and cater the students into their different food-classes and cater separately for each. When the list appeared it was headed;

- (1) Vegetarian
- (2) Meatarians
- (3) Eggarians

At this period Dr. Scudder spent almost her whole time with her students. When she was not lecturing to them or giving them tests, they were going with her on her ward-round or helping her in Outpatients'. When at last the day's work was over, she would play tennis or basketball with them, and finally the whole class would crowd in or on the rickety Ford and go out for a spin in the bland evening air.

That first class was always the closest to her heart, and she worked and struggled and prayed for the girls' final success. And she expected them to work every bit as hard as she worked herself.

One morning she came into the lecture - room to find an atmosphere of slight excitement. "Settle down quickly, girls," She said briskly as she went to the black board. "Now yesterday we dealt with idiopathic epilepsy. Today - what's the matter, Kamala ?"

The class president was standing up in her place. "If you please, Dr. Scudder," She began bashfully, "We thought\_" she hesitated.

"It's a public holiday today." Came from a bolder spirit at the back.

"Yes," said Kamala, "and we wondered if you knew. We thought perhaps we could - we might - have a day off."

For answer, Dr. Ida wheeled round and flung her chalk down on the desk. "So that's all you're thinking about!" She cried. "Holidays !" She had sat up till two o'clock preparing that morning's lecture, and for months she had not had a thought apart from her students and their success: "Very well ! If you don't want to have classes today, you needn't-nor any other day either !" And with a bang of the door she was gone.

The luckless seventeen stared at one another aghast. "Oh dear!" cried one. "And I only wanted the holiday to get time to revise my physiology !"

"And me," said another. "The exam is too close for anything else."

"Kamala, go after her. Tell her we're sorry."

"Tell her anything - but don't let her be hurt. We can't hurt our dear Doctor - Amma."

So Kamala went, picking a bunch of oleander and frangipani on the way, and explained this contritely to Dr. Ida. She too, was by now feeling somewhat ashamed, So peace was affectionately made. The lecture was postponed until the afternoon and after it they had a special tea party to celebrate the holiday, and all was happy again.

When the great day came for fourteen of this first class to take the examination, Dr. Ida's heart was in her mouth. This was the moment. Would their venture prove to have been justified ?

A British official spoke to her outside the examination hall. "Good morning. Dr. Scudder !" he said breezily. "Coming in with your young women ?"

She nodded, "I only hope they do us credit."

He shook his head admonishingly. "You mustn't be disappointed, you know, if they all fail."



down in the town is finished, and now, before they go to their evening's study, they have come together for fifteen minutes of thought and prayer.

The boy who leads them comes from the far north of India, on the borders of Nepal. He speaks in English, for that is the only language that all of the two hundred young people before him can understand - there are Marathas, Bengalis, Malayalis, Gujeratis, Assamese, even some whose homes are far across the sea in Burma. So the Bible-reading come from the familiar Authorised Version, and the hymn is one in which all could join.

They young man speaks, eloquently and easily, with many gestures of his thin, fine hands. "What is it to live for God?" he asks them. "Is it to spend all day reciting prayers, like the sanyasis and ascetics? Is it to give all one's energies to reading the Bible and attending church? To refuse to give any attention to the things of this world and to keep it all for the things of heaven?" He pauses dramatically. "No! A million times no. To live for God is to find the work. He wants us to do in this world and to do it with all our might. If we do that, if every thought and desire and energy is set upon doing that work, then indeed we shall live for Him. Then\_"

He continues, as eloquently as ever, but there is no real need. For eyes have drifted already towards a figure sitting near the speaker white-haired now, leaning forward a little to catch the words, but still the same Dr. Ida. "To find the work he wants us to do in this world, and to do it with all our might." - if that is living for God, the students of Vellore do not need to have it preached to them in words. They can see it in Dr. Ida.

*The author acknowledges her indebtedness to Dr. Scudder and her friends for the details of this story. She looks back with gratitude to her own visit to Vellore which provided the opportunity to see its founder, and something of the work.*



**POST SCRIPT**

1991 - five and half decades since Dr. Ida retired from Professional life and 31 years since her earthly life ended at the age of 90. The work she started and the spirit of service she inspired continue to live and grow. Memorials continue to be raised for her, such as the beautiful Scudder Auditorium and Hall at the Medical College, the Ida Scudder School in Vellore, and the Scudder professorship and Annual Oration in her speciality of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. A separate ward has been set up in her name to give effective secondary level care at low cost to the poor people in the slums of Vellore town. Her birth day, December 9, is celebrated by the whole CMC community each year as 'founder's day.' CSI Diocese of Vellore erected a bronze statue of her in the heart of the town. But, above and beyond all these, the truly living memorial to Ida Scudder is in the day-to-day life of committed persons trained at CMC, who carry on her work there, or who have gone out into many parts of India and neighbouring countries to serve and witness to her faith and determination.

Some of the early students of Dr. Ida, like Kamala mentioned in this story, went on too acquire the highest possible qualifications and became pioneers in the medical profession in India. In 1942 the medical diploma programme, whose beginnings are described in this booklet, was upgraded into the MBBS Course affiliated to the Madras University. The Christian Medical College become co-educational in 1947 and now admits 60 students annually, not less than 25 of them women. Opportunities for speciality training in various branches of medicine rapidly expanded at CMC in the 50's and 60's. Now about 100 specialists graduate annually after training in 49 postgraduate

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programmes. The School of Nursing, begun by Dr. Scudder in 1909, Now offers nine different courses, training about 150 nurses every year. Equally important are the 24 courses in various paramedical sciences in which about 200 men and women are enrolled. Most of the students and faculty live on the medical college and hospital campuses sharing in extra - curricular and religious activities and in all the experience of residential community living. Today CMC's graduates from the core of the trained health personnel for Christian Medical work all over India.

These training programmes became possible through the extension of the clinical facilities in Vellore. The Mary Taber Schell Hospital, the scene of Dr. Ida's initial 40-bed clinic, soon became inadequate to meet the increasing needs. In 1924, she opened the hospital in Vellore with 200 beds, now known as the CMC Hospital which has grown to over 1964 beds. The old Schell hospital has been moved to a more spacious new building in the same campus and continues as the Eye Department of CMC with 100 beds. A Mental Health Centre with 78 beds, an Institute of Mentally Retarded Children with facilities for 24 residents, a Rehabilitation Institute for Physically handicapped which can accommodate 45 and the New Life Centre for the rehabilitation of 9 cured leprosy patients have been developed on the Medical College Campus, 6 K.M. from the main hospital.

In these extensive facilities, over 596 doctors, 1535 nurses, 833 technical staff, 571 Administrative Staff, 350 engineering staff from various parts of India serve together in a spirit of co-operation, bound by a common desire to meet the total needs of their patients and students, with competence, compassion and relevance. The availability of almost all the modern medical specialities and supporting services in the same institution, the traditions of education

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and medical care ministered with love laid down by Dr. Ida, and the fact that all the hospital staff are available for full-time work without private practice (Which is unusual in India) draw patients from all parts of India as well as from neighbouring countries.

Dr. Ida's concern for persons suffering in outlying villages, who find it difficult to come to hospital still continues. Extensive community health and development projects replaced her initial 'roadsides'. Presently two full fledged health and social development schemes are in operation. CHAD (Community Health & Development) with 80 beds, and RUHSA (Rural Unit for Health & Social Affairs) with 60 beds, which take comprehensive health care to every house in over 180 villages of Kaniyambadi and K.V. Kuppam blocks around Vellore town. In addition to medical coverage, these projects are actively involved in the social, educational, agricultural and economic uplift of the communities, so as to improve the whole standard of living and thus the total health of each of its nearly 200,000 villagers. Under the Re-orientation of Medical Education (ROME) Scheme C.M.C. has been made responsible for the Anaicut block. The strategy is to work closely with the Government especially the Primary Health Centre staff. The community health and family planning specialists work in the slum areas of Vellore town., most of whose population live below the poverty line.

This combination of technical competence and the urge to be relevant to the health needs of a developing country has, more over, given rise to a wide range of research programmes (about 203 in 2001-2002), seeking to evolve and propagate methods of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases which are both effective and practical under Indian conditions.

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This then is the heritage of Dr. Ida Scudder, now a valuable asset of the Indian Republic and the Christian Church. Her spirit continues to guide and motivate the Christian Medical College community to live out her motto; 'Not to be ministered unto, but to minister'.

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