

Book Review-Memoir On call in Africa-In War and Peace

Dr N.P. Jewell, 308 pp

There is very little information available on environmental public health activities in most countries, and especially developing countries, over the period leading to the First World War, during the war and after the war. This book is an account on the life of Dr. Norman P. Jewell for the period 1910 to 1932, when he worked as a doctor in Seychelles and East Africa.

From the book, Dr Jewell was a hard working doctor who, on a number of occasions, worked continuously for more than twelve hours, travelled for long distances to visit his patients and endured harsh environment and working conditions in Seychelles and East Africa. It is reported that he was not able to take annual leave for a period of ten years.

The book reports on Dr. Jewell's first cases of diseases like Bubonic and pneumonic plague and abortus fever. The book also describes Dr Jewell's creativity while in the field when there was a shortage of water, stretchers and uniforms.

Dr. Jewell was instrumental in developing health systems in Kenya and in the British Army, including better patient care by identifying a number of 'inconsiderate ways' patients treated while admitted in hospital. He is credited with setting up of quarantine stations during influenza epidemic in Kisumu, encouraged smallpox vaccinations, treatment of yaws, starting surgical operations and published many research articles.

The book provides an account on life for European community in Kenya. The account is hilarious and funny as 'the community had their own funny characters like fairly Garland, adventure of Italians who owned a transport company, the Scott who strangled a leopard and they had wild animals trained as pets.'

The book provides numerous instances when indigenous methods of doing things by local people made an impact on Dr. Jewell that he stated 'Africans had a natural aptitude for mechanics and Africans had their senses developed to a degree unknown to European.' There are accounts of Wandoboro tribe ability to solve murder crimes, Nandi women nurses working in a hospital bed who used appropriate method to put out a fire, one Kikuyu who won every race from 100 yards to marathon in a span of six hours and cases of gonorrhoea and an infected glad of Dr Jewell's house help treated using indigenous methods.

There are a number of memorable poems written by Mrs Jewell.

Overall, this is a book worth reading to all those interested on an in-depth accurate account of life in Seychelles and East Africa for the period 1910 to 1932. The book would also be of interest to public health professionals, policy makers and students.



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