

British Raj, the conduct of affairs is authoritarian and bureaucratic, so that there are interminable queues at the airports while officials stamp, write in documents, operate computers, search baggage and enquire in detail about its contents. Drabness is relieved by the colour of the saris.

From a listening post in a Mogul Fort high above Jaipur my wife and I heard at sunset the ascending murmur of the city. In Udaipur we saw that the desert was transformed by artificial lakes backed by mountains into lovely scenes which even the ubiquity of cow dung discs saved for fuel could not spoil. At the Taj Mahal, with its intricately beautiful inlaid stonework, there was a group of carefree

and playful young Russians. In Delhi among the temples, mosques, Mogul Red Fort and streets crowded with people, cows and a medley of transport, was the simple grandeur of the Gandhi memorial in black marble. Our last trip was to Kashmir, where the natives pushed us to and from our houseboat in a small boat on a frozen lake. They kept themselves and us warm with glowing coals in a metal pan surrounded by a wicker basket, which they put under their rough woollen cloaks, so that by the end of winter their abdomens would be scarred. The snow had reduced the Shalimar gardens to a homogenous whiteness but there was sunshine and skiing up in the Himalayas.

The Red Handbook: an historic centenary

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On 21 February 1884, a sub-committee of the Medico-Psychological Association meeting in Glasgow was appointed to prepare a handbook 'in the hope of helping Attendants on the insane to a due understanding of the work in which they are engaged'. With commendable speed the four gentlemen concerned, Drs A. Campbell Clark, C. McIvor Campbell, A. R. Turnbull and A. R. Urquart, completed their allotted task, and in 1885 *The Handbook For The Instruction Of Attendants On The Insane* was published.

It emerged as a slim volume, bound in red hardboard, and consisted of 64 pages of text together with an Appendix listing all the public and private Lunatic Asylums in the United Kingdom and their Superintendents. The text was divided into five chapters under the headings:

- I The Body, its general functions and disorders;
- II The Nursing of the Sick;
- III Mind, and its disorders;
- IV The Care of the Insane;
- V The General Duties of Attendants.

In 1885, *The Journal of Mental Science* (31, 149), published a snooty and patronising review of the book. "We are not quite sure ourselves whether it is necessary or wise to attempt to convey instructions in physiology, etc., to ordinary attendants. Will they be the better equipped for their duties for being told that the brain consists of grey and white matter and cement substance?", writes the anonymous reviewer. He adjusts his elegant pince-nez and continues, "We hardly see what is to be gained by superficial knowledge of this kind."

Considering the book's brevity and the ambitious scope of its contents, it is not surprising that the information it contained was of necessity condensed and elementary. But it was a start; and not only a start, but, as it turned out, the handbook served as a most important milestone in the history of the education of 'Attendants on the Insane', who

must hitherto have been regarded as little more than pairs of hands.

That the labours of the Glasgow sub-committee were fully justified, and the forebodings of the anonymous reviewer in the *Journal of Mental Science* wholly unjustified, are reflected in the enormous success which its handbook and its successors have enjoyed in the century since the original publication. Indeed, within the covers of the many editions, gallantly attempting to keep pace with developments in the field, is contained a condensed history of British psychiatry.

The handbook has always been published in conjunction with the Medico-Psychological Association, and later the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, albeit over the years it has undergone some changes in title and format. For example, the seventh edition, published in 1923, was renamed *The Handbook for Mental Nurses*, but it was known more familiarly, even affectionately, by generations of psychiatric nurses as 'The Red Handbook'.

In April 1964, the ninth edition appeared under the editorship of the late Brian Ackner who enlisted a bevy of contributors, not only psychiatrists, all of them acknowledged experts in their own field, but also a senior psychiatric social worker and a superintendent of nursing. There were 335 pages of text, a suggested reading list, and a glossary of terms used in the text. This particular edition was reprinted six times, the last of which was in June 1978.

In 1979, the education committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists considered that the book was out of date and decided, no doubt for very good reasons, not to commission a further edition. Nevertheless, that the book has not yet outlived its usefulness is well illustrated by the fact that the copy of the last edition I took down from the shelves of the library at Horton Hospital School of Nursing, Epsom, is regularly borrowed, the last occasion being as recently as 29 May 1986!