EXPERIENCES DURING THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN JAMAICA.

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It may interest your readers to hear some of my experiences during the Kingston disaster now that I have returned and can look back upon the events with a more collected mind.

Sir Alfred Jones had organized a large party of influential political and commercial men to visit the West Indies, and especially to attend the important Agricultural Conference which was to have taken place in Jamaica during the week after arrival. I was asked to join the party, and as there were prospects of a crowded ship I arranged to take on the duties of surgeon to the vessel during the voyage. The outward run was uneventful, except that we lost one of our crew, who fell overboard between Barbados and Jamaica. We entered Kingston Harbour on Friday, January 11th, and disembarked about 9 a.m.

The delegates distributed themselves between Myrtle Bank Hotel and Constant Spring Hotel, a large number also being accommodated at Government House. I stayed at Constant Spring Hotel, some six miles out of Kingston, a delightfully-situated modern structure. Saturday and Sunday passed without any unusual phenomena. The days were not unpleasantly hot, and the evenings and early mornings were beautiful.

On Monday morning I accompanied several friends to Spanish Town, the old capital of the island. After seeing the various interesting objects, and having lunch, we returned to Kingston by the 2 o'clock train. At Spanish Town station I met Dr. Savage of Birmingham. We conversed for some twenty minutes before boarding the train. Little did we dream as we parted that he and his relations would be taken and I should be left within such a short space of time.

Arriving at Kingston, I walked down to the ship, some distance away, to see if anything was required, and as I stepped from the gangway on to the deck the earthquake occurred.

I heard a tremendous, rough, long, grating roar accompanied by a disturbance of the air resembling wind. This was followed by a long-continued rumbling, and the ship rose suddenly several feet, something striking her underneath. My first thought was that something had burst in the engine room. As I looked over I saw the wharf sway from side to side, and everybody on it instantly fell. The buildings in Kingston began to rock, and the walls to fall out with a long-drawn crash, clouds of white dust enveloping them.

There followed an ominous silence for about thirty seconds—the most tragic interval of all, to my mind. Then the air was rent by piercing shrieks and cries. Dust-begrimed people rushed out of the debris, some of them dragging their injured companions. I asked no one what had happened. One instinctively knew it was an earthquake, though one had not felt anything like it before.

I rushed down the gangway, up the wharf, and into the town, to find Sir Alfred Jones, whom I knew to be at Myrtle Bank Hotel. I fortunately wore rubber-soled boots, and so did not have much difficulty in running up the streets, which were piled with bricks and masonry, whilst walls were here and there tottering and coming down. The whole place was netted with fallen wires, including those supplying the tramway service, while beneath the debris was a mass of shrieking, praying, groaning humanity. Those of the black population who were not injured were gesticulating and imploring the help of Heaven with such phrases as—"Lord have mercy upon us!" "Christ is coming!"—evidently in the firm belief that the world was coming to an end. Reaching the hotel, I found the whole place in ruins, and was told by a white-faced, begrimed gentleman that he whom I sought was buried alive beneath a mass of masonry! I ran up the shaking stairs in the central portion of the hotel to look in the rooms. Then came the second shock, which brought me outside again without delay! Here I was told that Sir Alfred Jones with some others had miraculously escaped out of the hotel and had gone in a boat to the *Port Kingston*. I

therefore thought it best to follow, and at once organize systematic relief.

By this time, the town was ablaze, the flames being driven rapidly in our direction, fanned by a strong land breeze. From that time onwards I know nothing of the events on land. The *Port Kingston* was the only passenger ship in harbour. They brought the wounded to us along the wharf, and after we had cast off they came in boats, dug-outs, lighters, steamers, and every conceivable craft. In an hour's time, the companion ways, alley ways, decks, second-class saloon, smoke room, and hatches were simply littered with the dying and wounded; one could not step between them at times without touching a fractured limb!

An operating table was improvised, first in the main companion way, then in the second saloon, then on the after-deck, and finally on the wharf, and so each section of the ship was dealt with. Such a scene was presented as I have never experienced before. The injuries were terrible, mostly, however, to the lower limbs, spine, and head, all fouled by dust and mortar.

Our antiseptics naturally soon ran out, and we resorted to a lotion made from crude disinfecting carbolic until able to requisition a supply from neighbouring ships. A good supply of modern instruments was on board, and, in addition, I fortunately carried a large number of my own. We also had a good supply of chloroform, one amputation only being performed without an anaesthetic. In this case my stock was getting low, and there were several women to follow. The patient was given a big injection of morphine and did not seem to feel the pain very much (amputation below knee).

There was no lack of water, light, or assistance. The carpenter stood by me with splints, while a steward gave the chloroform. Every man on the ship worked like a Trojan, from the captain downwards. I would specially mention the stewards, who were unremitting in their attentions, and showed a natural aptitude for the work. I was aided for some two hours by a Jamaican doctor, who came out with a lighter full of injured. He worked heroically with me under most depressing circumstances, his home having been wrecked, his parents killed. I know not his name; I had not time to ask it, but I take this opportunity of thanking him for all he did. To Nurse Cross of the Middlesex Hospital I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude. She happened to be a passenger on the ship, and on hearing that the *Port Kingston* was turned into a temporary hospital she hurried down to our assistance. She worked night and day without rest of any kind, and showed such skill, fortitude, and endurance that Jamaica should ever remember her.

As to the actual surgical work, it was nothing but setting fractures of every description; arresting haemorrhage by ligature and tourniquet, cleansing wounds and amputating limbs. Such severe injuries it has never been my lot before to witness in spite of a lengthened experience in military surgery during the South African war. Some 200 cases passed through my hands. Surrounded by leading representatives of the press, and public men, much that is kind and appreciative has been written and said of our work on the *Port Kingston*. I hope I did my duty: I was glad to be there, and glad to be an Englishman, for we received on board that ship wounded and refugees of every colour, nationality, and creed.

Sir Alfred Jones had ordered that stores, stimulants, bedding, and clothing, etc., should be used without stint or charge, both from the ship and from his hotels. To him must be given unstinted praise for all he did. Sheets were torn up for bandages, and blankets and tow used for padding splints. The Countess of Dudley, Mrs. Arnold-Forster, and many other passengers worked devotedly in nursing, feeding, and tending the wounded, both on the ship, on the wharves, and in the hospital through these nerve-racking hours. Lady Dudley gave anaesthetics for me on several occasions with great skill.

The Kingston doctors who survived worked heroically at the hospital. How they got through that awful night in darkness, and with the water supply cut off, I do not know, but they grappled with the emergency in a splendid way. I visited the hospital twice on Wednesday and helped a little. A few injured were still struggling in, but the bulk of the work was already accomplished.

This sketch is written hurriedly, but I venture to hope it will be read with some interest by my professional colleagues.