

# **An African ‘Florence Nightingale’**

a biography of:

**Chief (Dr) Mrs Kofoworola Abeni Pratt**

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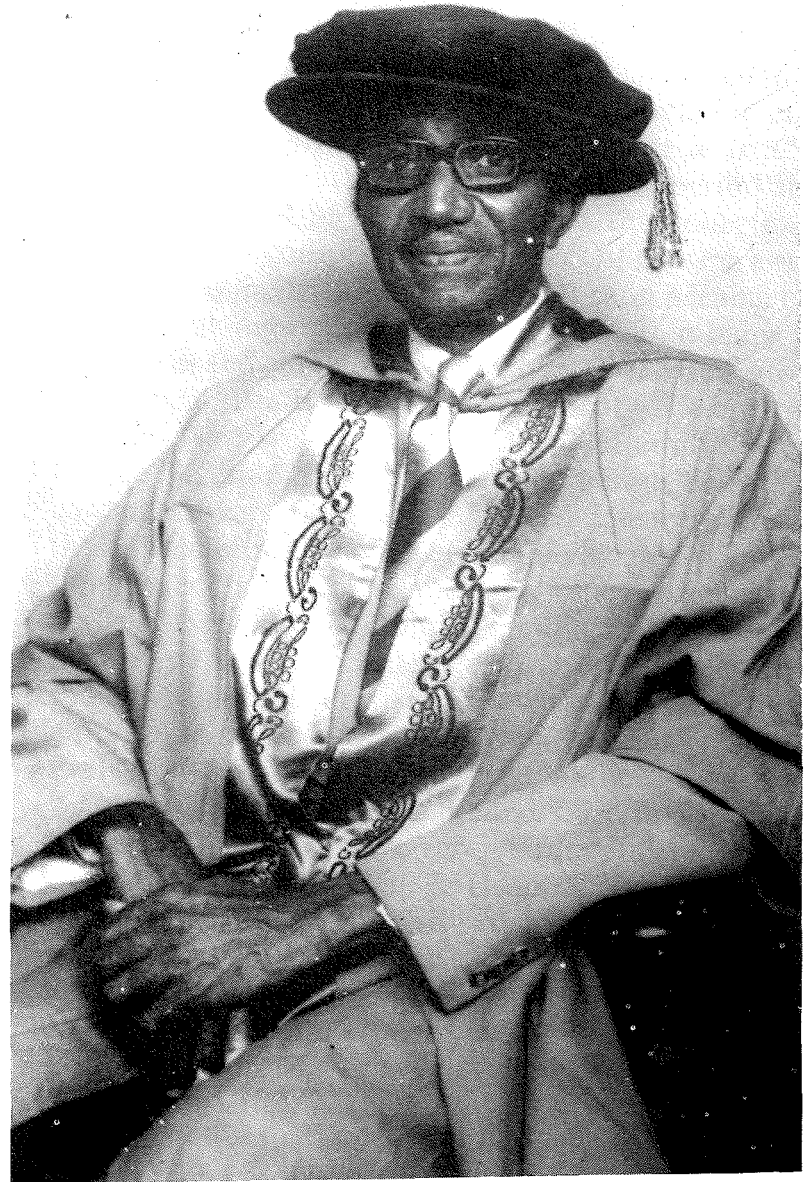
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Dedicated  
to the memory of



the late Dr Olu Pratt

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## Preface

in person. Space does not permit me to mention all of them by name. I am thankful to the following personalities for their direct and indirect contributions to this biography: Lady O. Abayomi, Alhaji D. Adamu, Mrs O. A. Adewole, Mrs A. Adegoroye, Professor (Mrs) E.O. Adebo, Mr E.O. Adelowo, Mr Justice and Mrs J. A. Adefarasin, Lady Kofo Ademola, Dr J.E. Adetoro, Mrs O. Akinkugbe, Mrs V. Akitobi, Mrs O.O. Alade, Mrs I. Amobi, Mrs Elizabeth Anstee, Mrs Adetoun Bailey, Alhaji M.A. Baker, Sir Mobolaji Bank-Anthony, Professor M.A. Bankole, Mr R. Gbadamosi, Professor I.A. Grillo, Mr Justice and Mrs Ighodaro, the late Rt Rev. I.G.A. Jadesimi, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson (rtd), Mr Justice C.A. Johnson, Miss M. McClelland, Miss O.O. Kujore, Chief Dr M.A. Majekodunmi, Miss I.L. Morrison, *MBE*, Mrs I.C. Nzeako, Mr Justice M.A. Odesanya, Alhaji Alade Odunewu, Professor T. Ogunlesi, Miss O.A. Oguntolu, Mrs T.N. Okechukwu, Mr S.S. Okezie, Mrs J.Y.D. Osomo, Archdeacon and Mrs Oredugba, Mr E.O. Otitoju, Miss G. Oyelude, Mr G. Parker, Miss E. Shanu, Miss S. Quinn, *CBE*, *PRCN*, Miss M. Smyth, *CBE* and the Rt Rev. F. O. Segun (former Bishop of Lagos). My wife, Cynthia, and children, Stephen and Karen have been patient and supportive throughout the preparation of this book.

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1987

The *Nursing Times* invited me in 1975 to review the biography of Florence Nightingale written by the distinguished historian, Elspeth Huxley. As I settled down to the fascinating story of the world's acknowledged founder of modern professional nursing, I wondered what motivated a reputedly wealthy, upper middle class English lady to take on the challenges of caring for the sick. The month was February and I duly submitted the review for publication. By the time it reached the pages of the journal, I was already in Nigeria at the Nursing Council where Chief (Mrs) Pratt had been the first nurse to occupy the position of Chairman of Council.

In the three years that I spent at the Council, I was to learn a great deal about this nurse whose career resembles, in many ways, that of Florence Nightingale, and my fascination with her contributions to nursing led to my accepting the challenge to write this biography.

This, therefore, is the story of a remarkable Nigerian whose example of womanhood is a living testimony to what an individual can achieve with dedication and hard work. The past six years, spent collecting and putting together materials for this book, have been revealing and instructive for me. To be a woman in a male-dominated society, indeed, in such a world, is not an easy experience: many have fallen under the weight of disapproval for daring to challenge the *status quo* reinforced by cultural *mores*.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to invite the reader to share with me the trials, tribulations, joy and, above all,

the humanity of Chief (Dr) Mrs Kofoworola Abeni Pratt. For nurses, doctors and members of the health profession in general, this book is a testimony to the struggle that had gone before as seen through the eyes and ears, indeed the commitments, of Nigeria's No. 1 nurse, and philanthropist, recently described by a Nigerian national newspaper as 'a spirited social worker and activist'.

**Dr Justus A. Akinsanya**  
London  
April 1987

# 1

## The Early Years

At the turn of the century when colonialism was thriving in Africa, events were taking place in Lagos which were to change the course of history in a later Nigeria. One of such events was the birth of a daughter to a couple living in Lagos, Augustus Alfred Scott and Elizabeth Omowunmi from the Johnson family. Kofoworola Abeni Pratt (nee Scott) was the second of four children of the couple—two boys and two girls. Mr Scott was born in Lagos and was himself the son of a distinguished Lagosian whose father had settled in Lagos from Sierra Leone. Her paternal grandmother was the daughter of Chief Taiwo, *alias* 'Olowo', who became the Olofin of Isheri in Lagos State. As Kofoworola Abeni did not spend her early childhood with her parents, her paternal grandmother saw to it that she, Kofoworola Abeni, knew her mother's family. She often took her on weekly visits to the Dohertys, particularly Chief Bayo Doherty, Mrs Gomez (his sister) and Auntie Samota (their aunt). Regular visits were also paid to the Oyedele, the Thompsons, Mrs Bell and the Silvas, especially Chief Afolabi Silva's father, as well as to her two aunts, Mrs Remi Afunku and Mrs Joku Williams. The family is rooted in Lagos but connections have been traced to Ijeun in Abeokuta in Ogun State, Iseyin in Oyo State and Isheri on the paternal side; and Ilesha, also in Oyo State, on her maternal side. It is clear from the records,

however, that Chief Taiwo Olowo was the towering strength behind the family tree, for he was a successful merchant whose disciplined mind, business acumen and diplomatic ability were recognised by colonial administrators of the day. He acted as ambassador-at-large within and outside Nigeria and conducted delicate negotiations in business and politics in neighbouring States such as Dahomey (now Republic of Benin). Although Christianity was already being established in Lagos at this time, Chief Taiwo Olowo was himself a devotee of the Ifa Oracle who became an early convert to Christianity. He was publicly baptized in Lagos as Daniel Conrad Taiwo. The family devotion to Christianity was to shape the later personal development of Kofoworola Abeni. She was brought up in a stimulating religious atmosphere at home.

Her maternal grandfather was also a successful merchant who had accumulated a lot of wealth from the former Belgian Congo (now Zaire). The Lagos scene in those days was particularly busy as the country itself was evolving politically. One of the job attractions for the young men of the day was the Civil Service; and Pa Scott's friends were all civil servants. Amongst them were Adeyemo Alakija (later knighted), Olayinka Alakija (who entered the Legislative Council), Latunde Johnson (later a barrister) and N.A.B. Thomas and E. A. Pearce. However, Pa Scott joined the firm of John Holt Limited and stayed in the private sector. While three of his friends left the Civil Service to read Law, his other friend, N.A.B. Thomas, stayed on in the Civil Service until his retirement and Mr E. A. Pearce went into electrical business, on his own.

Kofoworola Abeni spent much of her early childhood with her grandmother, her aunt and cousins at the ancestral home at Taiwo Street in Lagos. For much of the early years, however, her two brothers were either

boarded at their schools or lived in the disciplined environment of a vicarage. The prevailing idea of child-rearing in those days was that boys were to be brought up to face challenging roles while girls were protected and prepared for a submissive role in the family and the community. The young Kofoworola Abeni enjoyed the company of her brothers who returned home frequently.

During these early days, a tragic event occurred which perhaps shaped the later development of the growing girl. At the end of the First World War in 1918, an influenza epidemic swept through West Africa; and Lagos, already a cosmopolitan city, was ravaged by the infection. One morning, the young Kofoworola Abeni heard her father's voice. She expected the usual call to greet her father. The expected call never came and curious at this unusual experience, she sneaked quietly next door and saw her father picking up Ayoka (her sister) from the bed and clasping her to his chest. Suddenly, as she saw her father weeping and profoundly bewildered, she ran into the room. An aunt who was in the room with Pa Scott grasped the young girl and ordered her to go to the room next door. She was later to learn that her sister, Ayoka, had died at the tender age of two-and-a-half years.

This experience at the age of four years illustrates the way in which the young were shielded from the effects of death within the family in those days. As befitted a Christian family, however, all the children were gathered together and told that Ayoka had gone to heaven and that God the Almighty would look after her there.

The life of civil servants as well as those in the private sector in Nigeria in those days was centred around a constant move on transfer. This meant that the growing Kofoworola was brought up by her grandmother, aunt and uncle who, between them, provided a stable, Christian and loving home until she was aged eight years. Pa

Scott had served in the Northern Region of Nigeria and in other parts. He returned finally to his newly completed house at Ricca Street, Lagos in 1926 where the family settled. Soon after this, her two brothers were again separated from her and one was sent to a boarding school in Sierra Leone. This Sierra Leone connection was important because discipline and education were two attributes which the growing middle class in Lagos valued most highly in those days. Kofoworola Abeni herself was boarded with a Mrs Owobiyi—‘a strict disciplinarian’ as she recalled, who lived some five minutes’ walk to her school.

Life in the Scotts’ home was shared with some relatives and Kofoworola Abeni enjoyed her early childhood with a number of cousins amongst whom were Tinu Osinbowale, Maude Solarin, Akinrimade Davies and Peyin Martins. The upbringing was strict but affectionate with the trappings of the middle class home in materials and human support—nannies, housemaids and houseboys. Yet, as befitted the disciplined approach of parents in those days, the children were not excluded from domestic experience. Indeed, they learnt how to look after the home and the girls were socialised into domestic activities such as cooking, sewing and baby-care. But discipline and happiness in youth were combined so that the children grew up confident, loved and relatively free.

The physical environment was also conducive to a socialising experience for the growing children. Almost every house had a pavement which was turned into a mini-classroom in the evening. The children sat with their nannies and elders who, as the bright moon shone in the sky above, told them stories, folklore which recounted real life events and the young ones an insight into their cultural heritage. Some of these stories have survived years of life’s experiences and Mrs Pratt

remembers her childhood with great affection for her parents and other members of the family.

It was also an adventurous childhood which involved problems for the growing child. The gift of skipping ropes often led to trouble as the children skipped inside the home instead of outside where the secure compounds were reserved for such physical activities. The children enjoyed games and these were shared with their friends - usually those from equally disciplined homes. Christianity was the dominant moral basis for all activities, and attendance at Sunday Schools was a weekly experience for the children. Kofoworola Abeni herself was very keen on these activities and learnt a great deal from the experiences.

Yet, as with any childhood and in any age, it had its own mischievous though innocuous aspects. Inevitably, there were occasions when the child’s desire to enjoy herself would temporarily overcome the strict regime of a disciplined and moral environment. But the response to such momentary lapses was immediate and effective, either by remonstrance or parental reasoning and the occasional light punishment. Parental care was extended throughout the year and physical comfort was ensured by the regular expenditure on clothes, shoes, hats and, for the girls, jewellery. Christmas was treated as an annual occasion for buying the children special outfits and they looked forward, as children do today, to this yearly spending spree for themselves and the family. The combination of care and discipline in the homes was effective—it was not the experience of what might be termed ‘the idle rich’ today. There were also social parties which the children shared with close relations of the extended family and their friends. All these provided life-long experiences of the traditional, Christian and moral upbringing which guided the children of that era.

Then, as now, there were weddings at which the young

were socialised into the role of bridesmaids and later as maids-of-honour. This Christian experience needs to be emphasised, partly because it shaped much of the life-pattern which Mrs Pratt enjoyed as a child and partly because of the deep involvement she feels today in sustaining its continuity.

Funerals also provided opportunity for the young to learn about traditional rites. Children naturally enjoyed the feasting that accompanied such events but were nevertheless made aware of the significance of mourning as a last respect to the dead. For one thing, such ceremonies provided the children with opportunities to meet members of their extended families and share food, stories and other forms of entertainment with them. The children were also encouraged particularly to share with those other members of the extended family who were less fortunate in material things—an important lesson in family cohesion.

All these experiences revolved around the process of education. Kofoworola Abeni started school at St John's with two of her uncle's daughters where she lived when her father was on transfer to other parts of the country. The return of her father to Lagos began the process of education which was to shape her future career. Pa Scott wanted the best education for his daughter and chose the famous Girls Seminary—later the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Girls School in Lagos. The school, founded in 1869, followed the founding of the CMS Boys Grammar School, a decade earlier. It was the first school of its kind in Nigeria and only the second on the West Coast of Africa. The school consisted of a kindergarten and primary school and later became the first secondary school for girls in Nigeria.

The young Miss Scott arrived at the school and took her place alongside her fellow children but ahead of them were a few hand-picked girls. These were being

prepared for a career in teaching to complement the shortage of expatriate teachers, who had come from England to teach in the school. Mrs Pratt remembers some of the principals and teachers whose firmness and guidance made it possible for the school to maintain high academic standards and strict moral codes. As unmarried teachers, they dedicated their lives to the education of the girls in all aspects of life. Amongst these pioneers were Miss Waite, Miss Hunt and Miss Mellor who laid the foundation for later developments of the school. Miss Mellor was responsible for the transition from primary to secondary education in the school. She was followed by Miss Grimwood who, though not a graduate, carried on the high standard of education laid down by her predecessors. This enabled a few of the girls (of whom Kofoworola Abeni was one) to carry on to the Senior Cambridge Certificate Examinations. Amongst these dedicated teachers were some local successes such as Miss Randle (later Mrs Majekodunmi), Miss Turner (later Mrs Adeniji), Miss Shitta (later Mrs Alade), Miss Dawodu (later Mrs Euba) and others who provided shining examples for the young girls to emulate.

The records show that Miss Scott had no learning problems. She was studious, determined and hardworking and tackled her academic work with remarkable steadiness. She was also high-spirited and confessed to being occasionally rascally, even leading her group in some of their infrequent mischievous escapades. But normal growing children through the ages have exhibited such behaviour although one golden rule prevailed in those days—children were never allowed to be rude to their elders. The strictness of the upbringing was experienced both at home and in the school. Although enthusiasm for education was considerable in the community, its completion created problems for most families. Indeed, of the forty children with whom Kofoworola

Abeni entered primary school, only eight eventually continued to the secondary department.

What is clear is that Mrs Pratt's early experiences of women's education had influenced her in expecting success in herself and her fellow students. She was proud that two senior girls from her school had taken and passed their Senior Cambridge Examination without sitting the normal junior examination. This unprecedented achievement by Miss Alaba Cole (later Mrs Morgan) and Miss Tayo Oyediran was to be emulated by the young girls of the school including those in the kindergarten classes. The principal, Miss Mellor, who had spear-headed the remarkable progress in the school at this time, left and returned to Britain. It was feared that this might be the end of aspirations for higher education in Nigeria for girls and Pa Scott (as he was affectionately known), was always sensitive to the need for a good education for his children. He, therefore, prepared his daughter for admission to Annie Walsh School, Free-town, Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, the new principal of the school, Miss Grimwood, heard of the plans for her young student and invited Pa Scott for a discussion. The meeting resulted in the cancellation of the proposed admission to Annie Walsh School and the young Kofoworola Abeni stayed on to take her Senior Cambridge Examination at the school which had by then introduced a secondary department.

This period of Nigerian history is remarkable for the number of able young girls who emerged to demonstrate their intellectual and political development through education. The friendship that grew amongst the girls was both sustaining and life-long. The group included the late Arinola Manuwa, Egun Meadows, Jaiye Lahanmi, Funmilayo Okuyiga, Ore Cole, Yeside Macauley, late Motunde Jackson, late Tobi Jibowu and many others of that remarkable generation of women in

Lagos. Then, as now, educated ladies had to make a choice of career within the limited confines of socially acceptable occupational possibilities. It was not surprising that most of them decided on teaching (the traditional outlet for feminine talents, world-wide), nursing and the ultimate universal female calling—marriage. Of the group who married early, Mrs Pratt remembers one in particular—Funke Majekodunmi (Mrs Fadina) for she acted as her chief bridesmaid.

There were eight girls in Form II of the school that year. They were joined by three girls from the Methodist Girls' High School. Miss Chrystal, an expatriate teacher, worked exceedingly hard to prepare the girls for their Junior Cambridge Certificate Examination. Five of them, including Kofoworola Abeni, were successful and soon afterwards, one of them decided to get married—Miss Ayo Doherty (later Mrs Ogun); but the death of Mrs Pratt's closest friend, Tobi Jibowu, just before the results were released, shattered the young lady. The original class of eight finished with only three girls: Ore Cole—Mrs Fagbemi—(sister to Alaba Cole, who had made history in the school as one of two girls to pass the Senior Cambridge Certificate Examination in Nigeria), Yeside Macauley—later Mrs Ladeinde—a cousin, and Kofoworola Abeni.

In those days, the colonial service depended on individual dedication and so marriage was incompatible for those expatriate ladies who came to Nigeria to teach. Miss Chrystal who had helped the girls so much in their education experienced a conflict of interests and decided to get married to the manager of the CMS Printing Press in Lagos. Mrs Pratt and her friend, Ore Cole, were bridesmaids and a new teacher, Miss Turner, duly took over the education of the 'gang of three'—Kofoworola Abeni, Ore and Yeside. The three girls stayed on for the Senior Cambridge but were pleased to

be allowed to take the examination at the end of one year instead of the normal two years.

It was a hard time for the girls and their teacher. The sheer intensity of the work nearly destroyed the girls mentally but they were justly rewarded with successes in the Senior Cambridge Examination. The records show that Kofoworola Abeni gained four credits in the examination. Miss Turner returned to England soon afterwards due to ill-health, but recovered to share in the joy of her pupils to whom she sent a congratulatory cablegram from England. The achievement was celebrated by the school with the declaration of a one-day holiday for all pupils—such was the inspiration which the success brought to the school and the education community at large. While at the school, academic pursuits had not been the only interests. She also excelled in many other spheres of school activities. She was a patrol leader in the Girl Guides, captain of the netball team and of St Benedict House in the school. Sooner than later, the three girls had already embarked on plans for the next stage of their progress towards a career in teaching. They were joined by Miss Olayiwola Odufunade from Queen's College, at a special course for teaching in the secondary school which was started specially for them at Ibadan for the Teacher's Diploma.

Education was paramount in the minds of parents and children. The Teacher Training College was not just a place for qualifying as teachers but also involved a wide range of character-building activities as well. In the event, the four young ladies qualified as teachers and duly returned to their *alma mater* to continue the contribution to women's education in Lagos. This was a period of great personal challenge, development and intellectual promise. The importance of knowledge as the source of power, influence and progress was inherent in all that surrounded the growing young lady. Whatever

else followed this early period of Mrs Pratt's life must be viewed in the context of the opportunities, challenges and family devotion which she enjoyed as a girl in Lagos. She was guided by parental wisdom and did not resent the strategy for her future development. Indeed, she developed fully intellectually, socially and morally. The future was ahead, but Kofoworola Abeni Scott, a teacher and a determined lady, faced it with confidence in her own ability and the support of her family.

It is important to note that, though she was privileged in some ways because of the family into which she was born, that background was never allowed to limit the scope of her personal ambition and desire to succeed. It would have been easy in the prevailing climate of lessened opportunities for girls and the availability of material support, for an individual to be less determined and hardworking. As we shall see in later chapters, this personal determination was a guiding, life-long principle in helping Kofoworola Abeni to achieve her goals and, in so doing, provide a platform to help others.

## Marriage and Family Life

Maurice Chevalier's famous song summarises a universal truth 'Thank heaven for little girls; without them what will little boys do?' What indeed? For marriage is a biological, psychological and social necessity throughout the world, unless the individual opts out for personal or religious reasons. In the Lagos of the 1920s, marriage was the only sure progression for most growing girls. It dominated everything in the lives of girls and much of their upbringing tended to be related to its essential attainment. Then, and as now, Domestic Science (Home Economics) occupied a central place in the curricula of the education of girls. While boys were taught science subjects such as Physics and Chemistry, girls were required to learn about domestic affairs. This preparation for womanhood was a serious issue in such households and, in spite of the presence of home helps, girls were made to undertake certain domestic chores as a matter of routine in their homes. They cleaned the house, cooked the meals and, in their spare time, were encouraged to sew and knit. The training was unashamedly designed to prepare girls for the role of future hostesses and was reckoned to improve a girl's matrimonial chances if successfully learnt and accomplished.

In all these intensive socialisations, however, parents were careful to avoid the subjects of sex, pregnancy, labour and childbirth. They were not exactly taboo subjects

but each girl had to find out for herself at the appropriate time in the light of her physical and emotional maturity. The time to find out also depended on educational opportunities at school. For young girls in girls' schools, it was a structured but innocuous approach to learning about sex education in those days. In Kofoworola Abeni's school, the morning prayer was an ideal place to offer advice and guidance shrouded in ecclesiastical language that concealed very little from the imaginative child:

'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?'

The girls giggled among themselves and exchanged knowing glances but the teachers seemed oblivious to all that. Nor was any help to be expected at home where sex education was neither discussed nor alluded to by parents. The Christian values of those days included compulsory chastity as a virtue to be entrenched in the minds of growing girls. Yet sooner or later some girls would be mothers and Kofoworola Abeni had seen some of her friends joined in holy matrimony!

Not surprisingly, therefore, the road to marriage for her began on one of the school's important annual events. Prize-giving was an occasion for joy and congratulations, coupled with intense socialisation when families and friends shared the girls' successes with them. Kofoworola Abeni and her friends were dressed elegantly for the occasion in their special white uniform. Her successes were recognised by the school as she won three outstanding prizes for her academic, religious and sports' achievements in the school. As a young lady with noted enthusiasm and charm, she took part in the *Sailor's Hornpipe* to entertain the proud parents and relatives who gathered to share the day with the school. The girls were at their most endearing, happy and vivacious.



Among the guests who watched these delightful scenes was a young final year student at the Pharmacy College, Yaba. The young man was impressed with the spectacle of these high spirited and intelligent girls and had his eye on one of them. The future husband of Kofoworola Abeni was there to represent a cousin on behalf of his daughter and spotted the girl for whom he was to devote a family life of immense marital happiness. The young Olu Pratt admired Kofoworola Abeni and was able quite quickly to locate her home which was close to his friend's house. This fortuitous situation was used to advantage. Olu's friend acted as a go-between by taking messages to the courting couple and arranging their subsequent secret meetings. Parental surveillance was intense and boys and girls were encouraged to take part in social clubs and other activities under parental scrutiny. Intimate contacts between boys and girls were strongly disapproved of by most parents.

But parental surveillance has never prevented boys from meeting girls and the love between Olu and Kofoworola Abeni was rapidly established. The friendship and courtship between them lasted a long time and survived Olu's appointment as a pharmacist in the Civil Service. The couple's test of devotion was prolonged as he was transferred all over the country while Kofoworola Abeni remained in Lagos where she taught at her former school. By 1940, however, the strength of their developing affection was strong enough for them to become engaged. But engagement symbolises a Western approach to marriage while traditional demands were stringent and time-consuming.

The tradition demanded that a formal marriage proposal should be made to the parents of the girl and the network of the extended family by the boy's parents. This seemingly ponderous approach to matrimonial matters served an important purpose. It enabled both

families to test the viability of the proposed marriage. Thus much information would be sought on family backgrounds on both sides. The families were agreed on the marriage but Pa Scott had other plans for his daughter. He wanted her to go abroad and further her education; marriage seemed to him a stumbling block to that proposition. The couple were now very much in love and a feverish desire for marriage was irresistible. A quiet wedding was agreed and, on 3 January, 1941, the couple were married at the Cathedral Church of Christ in Lagos. There were blessings for the couple from the two families and they later left Lagos on an eighteen-hour train journey to Enugu, (in what is now Anambra State) in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria, where the young pharmacist was posted.

Life in the Civil Service was unstable and difficult, and the newly married Pratts moved on transfer from Enugu to Warri and then to Forcados. This last posting remained a source of simultaneous joy and sadness for the Pratts for their first child, a son, was born and died there. This experience shocked the entire family and when a second was born to the Pratts, a cousin, who was a nurse in Lagos, travelled to Forcados and stayed with them. She was accompanied by a sister of the then Mr Pratt who was a midwife, and the young baby survived the early dangers of life in Forcados. It was later in London that a further addition to the family arrived. A second son was born at Guy's Hospital and the Pratts, by then both qualified, managed without the need to send for family help in caring for their young family.

The long relationship and devotion of the Pratts continued and by this time, she was beginning her now world-acknowledged interests in professional, religious, social and philanthropic connections with various organisations. These aspects are discussed in subsequent chapters but it is crucial to make the point that these

later developments owed their fulfilment to the remarkable partnership between the Pratts. Dr Pratt saw his wife's numerous activities in the years of their happy and devoted marriage as an integral part of their lives. He was all along patient, resilient and visionary in his approach to their marriage.

Dr Pratt was a quiet and remarkable gentleman whose characteristic gentleness led the late Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Leo Taylor, to nickname him the 'Lady Gentleman'. He was perceptive and saw the seeming compulsion of his wife to be involved in diverse professional and other activities as an important contribution to the development of the country. He supported his wife's commitment to nursing, the wider issues of children's and women's rights, and provided an unobtrusive support in the background through a stable family home. The consequences of such commitments to issues of political, economic and social justice were often far-reaching for the country. Much was achieved in the struggle for women's liberation and human justice but problems inevitably arose when these ideals were challenged by those with equal determination to oppose change.

In such circumstances, husband and wife partnership, built on a bed-rock of love, devotion and understanding, provided Mrs Pratt with the vital support she needed at home. As with anyone who has an immense sense of concern for the social injustices that surround the society, she sometimes needed a shoulder to cry on.

Dr Pratt, without the sentimentality which such feelings might produce, had the patience and moral conviction too about the causes in which his wife believed to provide matrimonial solace for her.

The country-wide political activities of Mrs Pratt over the years have led to her appearances on television and in numerous newspaper reports. The media, always

eager to highlight problems but sometimes impatient for answers, widely reported every pronouncement of Mrs Pratt but public reactions are generally difficult to gauge. On this, Dr Pratt as a **medical practitioner** and one who was in constant touch with the general public often brought his wife the reactions of the average Nigerian viewer, listener or reader.

In the course of all these activities, the family had experienced many stresses and strains but Dr Pratt devotedly supported his wife and had been the main source of human strength behind her. He was proud of the numerous honours that society bestowed on his wife and the international recognition she earned for her professional activities. This outstanding example of mutual trust, devotion and respect is probably unique in the African setting. For such is the understanding between the couple that four decades of national and international acclaim of her success as a nurse, a feminist, an activist, a campaigner for women's rights and partnership in the running of national and international affairs had left them devoted and loving over these years.

The successful relationship owed much to the determination of Mrs Pratt to remain a wife, a mother and a companion to her husband. In spite of her different commitments as a professional nurse and later in political office, she remained essentially a wife who continued to take care of the domestic activities of the household. Notwithstanding the availability of domestic help, it was Mrs Pratt who personally ensured that the needs of her family life were met. For her, success in marriage demands not only the fundamental requirement of love but also the determination to work for it. After forty years of marriage, she had proved that it could be done and without sacrificing personal and professional development. The Pratts had developed a sharing and caring



Mother and child- Mrs Pratt and her younger son, Olufemi.

association for themselves, their two children and the wider extended family network.

The loss of a child is a shattering experience for any couple, and the Pratts had borne the distress caused them by the loss of their first child with Christian understanding. As noted above, 1941 saw the couple in Forcados. There, as pharmacist in charge, the then Mr Pratt dispensed medicines, and often was required to do more than his professional preparation enabled him to carry out. Although there was a medical practitioner in charge of the hospital, he was often away on tour of up to two or three weeks during which time the responsibility for the medical care of the hospital at Forcados devolved upon the young pharmacist.

Forcados was a small town where boats docked regularly. It had a small port which was used mainly for bringing in goods for distribution to the outlying districts. The hospital served the health care needs of the population which included the staff and their families in the only two government establishments on the island, the Marine Department and a prison. As in all places where services were established by the government in those days, religion thrived and a church (Anglican) with a school provided spiritual and educational opportunities for the inhabitants of the small seaside town. There was always a compelling religious interest for the residents in Forcados at that time. The Roman Catholic church and school were also established for those of the Catholic faith. The Marine Department was managed by two British officials with whom the Pratts enjoyed a good friendship during their stay. The transfer of staff was a constant event and, while the Pratts were at Forcados, two doctors arrived one after the other, one replacing the other in rotation to take charge of the General Hospital. The arrival of Dr Taylor Cole and his successor, Dr Femi Pearse from

Lagos was an event welcome to the Pratts, for they had known the two doctors very well in Lagos. The small, closely-knit community in Forcados was an ideal setting for the young couple and they made friends and shared a life of quiet commitment to the service of the country with their fellow citizens.

The Pratts' second son was now some five months old and in December 1943, the family returned to Lagos on leave. The occasion was a great home-coming and even more for the baby, Babatunde, who was christened at the Cathedral Church of Christ in Lagos. The family, now united with their relatives in Lagos, began to settle down but soon they were to leave again on transfer to Obubra in the then Eastern Nigeria. These travelling experiences were quite dramatic for Mrs Pratt who, before her marriage, had spent almost all her life in Lagos. On one of the two occasions when she did leave Lagos, she had attended the wedding of a friend at Abeokuta when her former classmate, Miss Funke Majekodunmi married and became Mrs Fadina. The only other occasion when she travelled outside Lagos was to attend the Teacher Training College at Ibadan. This limited travelling experience hardly prepared her for the major transfers to various parts of the country. In those days, too, many civil servants (particularly those from Lagos), dreaded being transferred and some would rather resign their appointment. The rest of Nigeria represented the unknown to these civil servants and, for many parents, the thought of their boys being transferred terrified them.

Forcados also typified the remoteness and the unexpected which many feared. Mrs Pratt, having lived mostly in Lagos, had not seen a snake at a close range before. Yet soon after they reached Forcados, she was suddenly confronted with a snake crawling slowly through the compound into her kitchen in Forcados. It

induced such fears in her that the kitchen was abandoned for the rest of their stay there. This fear of snakes was so tense for her that, when another one was spotted curled up in the bathroom of their Obubra home, Mrs Pratt promptly rushed out and the colonial District Officer was asked to take steps to prevent 'creepy crawlies' from terrifying the young Lagosian housewife.

this time, the family had found solace in the little town of Obubra. Although there was a doctor in the local hospital, the young pharmacist realised that the demands for medical attention were much greater than what the doctor could cope with alone. Some patients inevitably sought his help but he was unable to provide them with full medical attention. This experience was to encourage him to decide on a future medical career. He later resigned his appointment in order to proceed to the United Kingdom for further studies. By this decision, the couple were united and Mrs Pratt joined her husband in Britain with their three year old son, Babatunde.

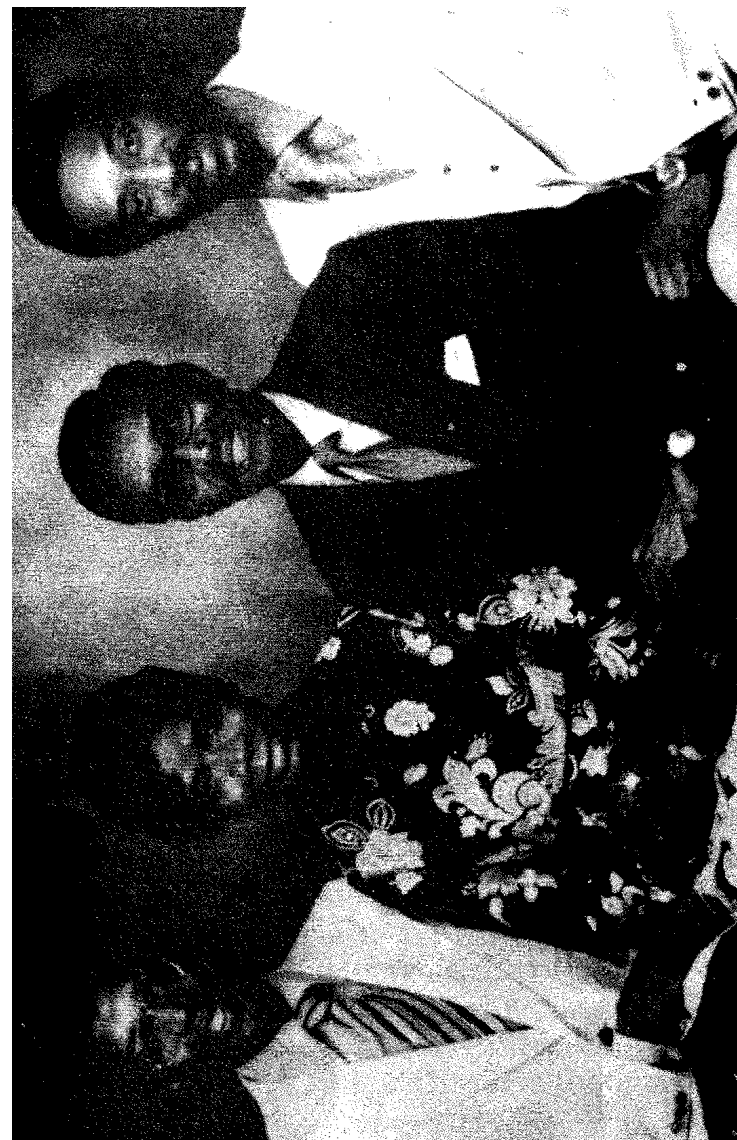
1952 was another eventful year for the Pratts in Britain. It was the year of the birth of their second son, Olufemi. He was, in fact, their third son and soon after the birth and the congratulatory kisses, Dr Pratt had remarked, jokingly, that his wife might have surprised him with a daughter that time. The cultural implication of this is interesting for, although men in the Yoruba culture are sensitive to the need for a son to continue the patriarchal line, a daughter is sometimes desired, too.

Femi made rapid progress and was christened at St Martins-in-the-Fields, the famous church in Trafalgar Square, London. He was barely one month old at the time. One of Mrs Pratt's colleague from her training days at St Thomas' Hospital, Elizabeth Anderton (Mrs Anstee), was the Godmother. He was three months old when the mother decided to take advantage of the Nightingale Fund grant previously offered to her. She pro-

ceeded to the Royal College of Nursing for the Ward Sisters' day course while Femi was cared for by Dr Pratt's cousin, Mrs Akerele. She completed the course and obtained distinction in the final examination. By now, Dr Pratt had been appointed as medical officer with the Commonwealth Development Corporation and was later posted to the Cameroons. The family was thus divided between England and the Cameroons.

At this time, Babatunde was about to leave his day preparatory school in Guildford. Arrangements were made for him to continue his education at a boarding school in Woking, Surrey. This proved convenient in that he had lived with his guardian, Mrs Dodds, not far away in Guildford and could still feel close to her. Nine years had passed since Mrs Pratt came to London and she now prepared to return home. Femi was fifteen months old when his mother took up an appointment at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan. At three years of age, he started at the Staff School on the campus of the University of Ibadan where he remained until the age of six years. He grew up in an atmosphere in which life was blissful for the young Nigerians who formed part of the academic and professional community of the UCH and the University College. Ibadan. There were more expatriate staff than Nigerians in those days but the young Nigerian academics and professionals were free of racial discrimination.

The settled life was interrupted in 1956 when Mrs Pratt returned to London in order to undertake the Nursing Administration course at the Royal College of Nursing. She was accompanied by a maid (Dupe) who helped her to take care of Femi. She secured a house in Highgate from an elderly lady who was going to live in Harrogate for some time. The fully furnished three-bedroom house had all the facilities that would make



Dr and Mrs Pratt with their two sons. From left are Olufermi (computer analyst) and Babatunde (medical doctor).

life comfortable for the three of them. The rent was an incredible six guineas (£6.6s) per week!

When she returned to Ibadan, Mrs Pratt was joined by her husband who had accepted a post with the Western Nigeria Development Corporation. Dr Pratt later joined the Government Medical Services and was posted successively to Badagry, Epe and finally to Ijebu-Ode as Medical Officer-in-charge. During this time, the Pratts saw each other frequently as these places were close to each other.

During her course in London, Femi was enrolled at a local preparatory school and Babatunde was brought to London from Guildford to prepare for his 11+ examination for entry to secondary school. He duly passed and was admitted to a public school, Kelly College, in Devon. Mrs Pratt accompanied Babatunde to the interview and later travelled with him to begin his secondary education in September 1957. This period was one of the difficult times for Mrs Pratt. For she continued in her course with the assistance of a relative, Mrs Alaba Phillips, who came to live with her. This enabled her to undertake the attachment part of the course at Nottingham General Hospital. It was a mark of her determination that, despite all the difficulties, she successfully completed the course.

The children had benefited from the devoted attention of their parents and the role of the mother during their difficult formative years when she acted as a virtual one-parent support for their development. Babatunde entered St Bartholomew's Medical College, University of London and qualified as a doctor in 1978 taking the MB, BS (London) and MRCS. LRCP. Femi successfully completed his secondary education in England and entered Chelsea College of Aeronautical Engineering and qualified in 1974. He later completed his flying instruction and obtained a private pilot's licence. Fol-

lowing an illness which prevented him from taking up his flying career, the Pratts rallied round their son who later entered London University to complete a BA (Hons) in Economics and Politics before taking a post-graduate course in Computer Science.

## The Teaching Profession

This story ran far ahead in the last chapter. It is time now to retrace our steps and cover the same ground in the detail it deserves. There was no plan that the young, well-educated and highly intelligent Kofoworola Abeni should become a teacher. Education for girls was optional in those days and parents who could afford it (and there were a few in Lagos then) encouraged their daughters to continue their education beyond primary and secondary levels. For Pa Scott, as with other parents, the future life of his daughter was very much in his mind and education was an important means of enhancing that future. The young ladies themselves indulged in characteristic discussions about the future and what they thought it had in store for them, but the issue of going abroad was not particularly central to their considerations. Mrs Pratt (as she was to be) and her friends Ronke Doherty (née Williams), Olayiwola Kukoyi (née Odufunade) and Irene Thomas were clearly ambitious and would pursue their education with vigour and determination. Indeed, this was also true of some of the girls in nearby Queen's College which was established in 1927, many years after the establishment of King's College in 1909.

However, Queen's College began to attract some of the girls from other schools and some left from Kofoworola Abeni's group and the Methodist Girls' High School

to complete their education there. The departure of some of her friends to the new school prompted her to ask her father if she, too, could apply to the new school. This was resisted by Pa Scott who felt that she ought to complete her education in a school with an acknowledged tradition of scholarship and character building. She stayed on there with pride in the achievements of the school which included the education of such ladies of later distinction as the Robbins, the Moores, the Macaulays (Ajasa) and many others at the time.

It was against this background that the problem of a future profession was being considered by the parents of the girls in their final years at school. Just before the Senior Cambridge examinations, three good friends at the CMS Girls' Seminary—Ore Cole, Yeside Macauley and Abeni Scott—were invited to the principal's office. Miss Grimwood, without revealing anything, asked the girls to invite their parents to call at the school and see her. This request was quite shattering to the girls for they had no idea why their parents were being invited to see the Principal. They consulted one another and wondered whether the message should be delivered to their parents. They were suspicious that the invitation might be connected with a move to ask them to stay on at the school—a prospect they did not particularly welcome. But the message *had* to be delivered and their parents duly called to see Miss Grimwood who informed them of the outstanding potentials of the young ladies. She felt that they would benefit from a special training programme that will enable them to teach in the enlarging secondary schools for girls in Lagos.

The parents were naturally proud and delighted but the girls had to be convinced that it was a worthwhile idea. Each parent discussed the offer without any attempt to influence their girl's decision. In the event, they all welcomed the idea and thus began the move





The first four Diploma students, 1932. Sitting left to right: Miss Ore Cole (later Mrs Fagbemi), Miss Yeside Macauley (later Mrs Laclchinde); standing behind are Miss Layiwola Odunmade (later Mrs Kukoyi) and Ivliiss K.A. Scott (later Mrs Pratt) respectively.

towards a career in teaching for the three girls. Although the idea of an education abroad was being considered by the parents, there was no decision as to where the teacher training would be undertaken. By this time, further education abroad was seen as a natural progression for a few Nigerians but the authorities wanted the teacher training to be located in Nigeria as an experiment designed to encourage higher education development in Nigeria for women.

While the girls pondered about their future career in teaching, the three Principals of the Girls' Schools in Lagos—CMS Girls' Seminary, Methodist Girls High School and Queen's College—held a meeting with Miss Macdonald (Education Officer) of the Government Department of education. The meeting was attended by some officials of the newly-created Yaba Higher College to consider the proposed course and its location. There was intense discussion on location and both the Principals of the CMS Girls' Seminary and the Methodist Girls' High School voted in favour of its location anywhere except Yaba Higher College. This was to avoid a co-educational arrangement which they considered premature in the Nigerian situation. Miss Blackpool, the Principal of Queen's College, disagreed because she saw a distinction between Mission and non-Mission schools. For while CMS Girls' Seminary and the Methodist Girls' High School were mission-controlled, Queen's College was established by the government of the day and had no vested religious interests.

Information reached the girls about the debate and although they would have preferred to go to Yaba Higher College, they were in no position to voice an opinion on the matter. In the event, the missionary voice won and the girls proceeded in due course to the United Missionary College for female teacher training at Ibadan. A letter of admission informed the girls of



where to report for their course along with a list containing clothing, books, mattresses, pillows, buckets, washing materials and other necessities for communal living. The College would provide accommodation, bed and food but the students' parents had to provide the rest and pay the fees.

In the intervening period, a concerted effort was made by the parents to prepare the girls for their new lives. Amidst the excitement of an adventurous future, the girls reflected on the challenges ahead of them and their friendships were strengthened. The three girls from CMS Girls' Seminary were joined by the only student from Queen's College (Olayiwola Odufunade) and left Iddo Railway Station with their parents and relatives in attendance to wish them safe journey.

The experience was new for all the girls, apart from Miss Scott who had travelled outside Lagos once before for a two—day stay at Abeokuta. For the others it was the first break with the sheltered life in Lagos on a journey to the unknown. It was indeed a terrifying journey for the four girls and very little was said to one another as the slow train left Lagos for Ibadan. Arrival at Ibadan later that afternoon was equally stressful as the girls were faced with their first crisis at the station. There were few taxis to help passengers. Fortunately, one of their former teachers at the Seminary who had married and lived in Ibadan had agreed to meet them at the station. Mrs Majekodunmi (nee Randle) with her driver met the girls and drove them to the College. She used to live next door to the Scotts in Lagos and had been informed of their daughter's arrival at Ibadan to train as a teacher. Mrs Majekodunmi helped the girls to settle down in the new college and provided additional comforts— needed for them.

There were two main courses in the College—one for students with the primary school leaving certificate who



Miss Kofoworola Abeni Scott on her 21st birthday anniversary.

were trained for the Teacher Higher Elementary Certificate. The other was for students with full secondary education in which Abeni and her two colleagues became foundation students. There were four of their former friends who had left school after primary education on the three-year course when they arrived. The fact that these other girls were in the third year of their own course encouraged the newly-arrived 'gang of four' from Lagos to settle in what was undoubtedly a harsher environment than they had known in Lagos. For such basic utilities of life such as electricity and water were luxuries which the girls now appreciated because they were hard to obtain for their use. Ironically, students today are in the same position and so is the general population in Nigeria because of the shortage of these essential services.

But education was there to be had and the challenge was taken up with determination and enthusiasm by the girls. They were delighted to find that they were under the charge of Miss Hunt who was their former Principal at the CMS Girls' Seminary. She was pleased to see them again and welcomed the four students to the College. They had been allocated a dormitory in the Blue House. The students' quarters were named by colours in the College and the girls shared the dormitory while communal meals were taken with other students.

The College was a large compound set in very pleasant surroundings. It was well-kept and had living accommodation for staff and students. The administration was excellent and Miss Titi Pearce (later Mrs Sodeinde) was the Warden. She helped all the students to settle down in their new environment. Although she had only just joined the staff when the girls arrived, she had behind her the experience of life in Lagos and overseas where she had studied. There were myriads of problems from personal to academic, and help was always available

from the Warden and the Principal. However, the girls were sensitive to the fact that Miss Pearce had other problems apart from helping them and tried to avoid bothering her too much.

The process of settling down was difficult enough but it was made more so by other experiences. The girls had their first night in the Blue House and reflected on their new lives, then the next day brought a complete shock to them. The College bell rang early in the evening and two friendly-looking senior students informed the girls that they would have to take their buckets and fetch water from a nearby river for their bath and other washing needs. To girls brought up to the use of pipe-borne water in Lagos, the new experience was hard and difficult to bear. The experience would be humbling and instructive. This was readily accepted by the girls but the thought of fetching water from a 'river' rather than a pipe (to which they were used in Lagos) was quite worrying to them.

As they reluctantly prepared to go and fetch the water from the river, they saw a group of four junior students outside their room. They asked if they could request them to be their 'College Mothers'. This was a tradition at the College whereby junior students chose senior ones as 'College mothers'. In terms of socialisation, it served an important function, for it enabled the senior students to pass on the water-fetching chores to the junior ones. It was a simple and effective way of accustoming the junior students to accept responsibility while relieving the senior students of the chores. It thus encouraged the junior students to see the advantage of progressing to senior status in the College and thus avoiding this water-fetching exercise in turn.

Kofoworola Scott got a local Ibadan girl as her 'daughter'. Mope was a shy girl who took her responsibility very seriously. She helped her 'mother' and ensured a

steady supply of water for her use, washed her clothes and plaited her hair regularly. This important status was recognised by Mope's parents who regularly sent gifts to their daughter's 'College mother'. In turn, Mope received gifts from Kofoworola Abeni when she returned from visits to her home in Lagos. The relationship between 'College mother' and 'College daughter' was also extended to academic exercises. But all these aspects of life at College were designed to ensure that the students performed their academic tasks with vigour and enjoyment of College life.

The curriculum for the one-year teaching course consisted of four subjects:

- Principles of Education
- History of Education
- Educational Psychology
- Theory and Practice of Education

The Principal, Miss Hunt, was responsible for the lectures on Theory and Practice of Education. In addition, all students undertook teaching practice to develop their professional skills as teachers. The students had no classrooms for particular lessons but received lectures from visiting lecturers from Lagos. There were reference books for each subject and question papers to be attempted to monitor their progress. This aspect of the course was specifically introduced for the one-year course. The students were expected to do much of the work by themselves but the Principal was helpful whenever difficulties arose. The practical teaching was supervised by the Principal who was assisted by teachers from the nearby school (Kudeti Girls School, now St Anne's, Ibadan). It was an intense period of personal and intellectual development for the students.

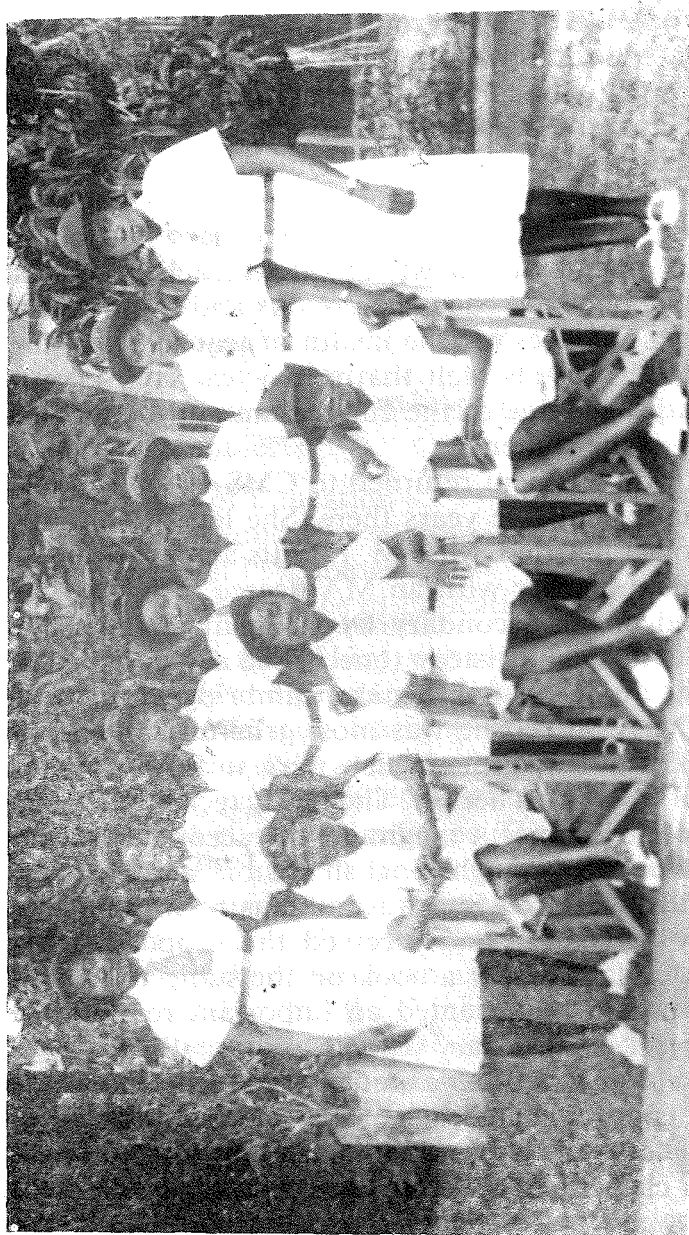
At the end of one year in Ibadan, the students took their qualifying examinations as teachers and three of

the four passed. They all returned to teach at their *alma mater*, CMS Girls' Seminary in Lagos. Although Layiwola went to Ibadan from Queen's College, she, too, returned to CMS Girls' Seminary where she had been a pupil before transferring to Queen's. The one-year course was discontinued after the end of the first intake and the period was increased to two years. The change was welcomed by the newly qualified teachers who had found the one-year course strenuous and overstretched with consequences for the health of teachers and their students. It was also felt that a two-year course would allow a broadening of the curriculum and better preparation of the students.

Kofoworola Abeni returned to CMS Girls' School in 1935 and spent five years there. She left in December 1940 to get married. Miss M. I. Potts an expatriate and a graduate teacher with an MA degree in history, was the head of the Secondary Department of the school. Miss Scott taught history (one of the subject in which she got credits in her Senior Cambridge Certificate) under Miss Potts. She was most generous, intellectual and efficient—qualities which were to form key attributes of Miss Scott herself. The newly recruited teachers were allotted subjects taught in the secondary department. Miss Scott taught English History and History of the British Empire. She was anxious to introduce the History of Nigeria and received the support of Miss Potts who later wrote a book on the subject. This was published and represented an important reference for the subject in secondary schools.

There were two other expatriate teachers who worked in the department and each had two specialised subjects. All teachers were expected to teach religious knowledge to their classes and covered other aspects of the curriculum as well.

The smooth running of the school suffered a set-back



First Rangers of CMS Girls School, Lagos, 1937. In the centre is Miss Ronke Williams (later Mrs Doherty) as captain, and to her left is Miss K. A. Scott (later Mrs Pratt).

with the start of the Second World War in 1939. Although hostilities were taking place in Europe, the return home of some expatriate staff on leave was a serious loss as most were unable to return to Nigeria. The local teachers had to take on additional subjects and Miss Scott was responsible for Physiology and Hygiene. By 1940 the number of girls who took the Junior Cambridge Certificate had grown to fourteen, but most of them left without proceeding to the Senior Cambridge class. Five of these girls were in Class V, when Miss Scott left the school in 1940 and got married.

This was a momentous period for women's education in Nigeria. This is evidenced by the names of those girls who subsequently went on to achieve higher goals in life and made immense contributions to the development of the country and of womanhood in Nigeria. Amongst these outstanding women a few may be mentioned here—Bisi Pearce, Maude Phillips, Winifred Petgrave, Charlotte McEwen, Yinka Coker, Bola Johnson, Busola Phillips, Deborah Fasan, Yetunde Wey, Ebun Fasuyi, Teju Aderemi, Molara Ajose, Similade Johnson, Ayo and Caroline Taylor, Abimbola Phillips and many others who are today in positions of responsibility in all sectors of Nigerian society. As for the teachers, Mrs Pratt maintained regular contact with them and they wondered how so much could have been achieved by so few in those remarkable years. She saw marriage as a necessary personal fulfilment and another stage in the continuing life pattern which must be full and committed. Teaching provided a starting point for Mrs Pratt. She was, according to Dr Juliet Macaulay, a strict disciplinarian who worked hard to bring out the best in her students. By all accounts, she did not suffer fools gladly but helped the weak ones to be strong and productive in their education. The girls appreciated her efforts. Teaching set the scene for Mrs Pratt's later development as an

educator, and nursing was to give the challenge needed for a profound commitment to the development of Nigeria and of the health and welfare of Nigerians. A call to nursing seems a logical next step.

## The Nursing Profession

1944 was a momentous year in the lives of the Pratts. They were in Obubra then and her husband had practised as a pharmacist for eleven years. In 1942 when events were clearly developing in the health services of Nigeria, it became increasingly evident that medicine would be a more comprehensive preparation for the young pharmacist was already involved in considerable physical care of patients. After a lot of soul searching about the timing of the venture, the couple decided to take the important step of leaving Nigeria so that the ambition to read medicine could be fulfilled. Mr Pratt resigned his appointment from the government service at Obubra and the couple returned to Lagos. There were two difficulties inherent in their plan. Firstly, the Second World War was in its dreadful progress and shipping was difficult to arrange as the troops were returning to Britain from several parts of the world. This was a temporary matter, however, and the discussion centred around the second issue. What Mrs Pratt would do in England if she accompanied her husband? The financial implications were exceedingly serious for the young couple for government service had not provided much in the way of financial security for them.

The debate seemed to point to a joint effort at what the future would hold for the couple and Mrs Pratt was anxious to undertake anything that would complement

and enhance her husband's professional practice. As they explored the various possibilities for the future, the idea of doing nursing came up, and the husband exclaimed, 'Surely, you are not going to do nursing? What would your father say?'

Nevertheless, they both agreed that the plan seemed a good one and though aware of the possible criticism of her proposed future career by her father, Mrs Pratt considered that it would benefit her marriage and so she decided to take up nursing in Britain. This was quickly followed by arrangements for her husband to leave Nigeria with five other fellow students in order to pursue medical studies in Britain. After a relatively short preparation, he sailed from Apapa Wharf watched by his wife from the quay-side. Mrs Pratt remained with their son but the separation was not to be long for she, too, soon began to make her own plans to join him.

First, though, she had to let her father know of the plan. The moment of disclosure to her father was dreaded to the end. When eventually she informed him of her intention not only to join her husband, but also to take up nursing in Britain, he exploded in a fury of uncontrolled disappointment. How could she decide to be a nurse with the education she had received and the family's standing in the community? She agreed with him that nursing was associated with menial tasks but she expressed the wish to undertake the necessary training. So, as with Florence Nightingale and her parents in England, Mrs Pratt was faced with strong parental objection to her future plans to train as a nurse. The father saw nothing professional about nursing nor was Mrs Pratt herself aware of this herself. However, she was perceptive enough to realise that if she could become a qualified nurse, it would help her to support her husband's eventual medical practice.

Teaching would, of course, have satisfied her father

but this was not considered because, by this time, she had given it up to be a housewife and mother. Nursing offered an attraction for her in that she saw it as enabling her to maintain her domestic responsibilities as well as providing a useful service to society through her involvement in the practice of nursing. This was seen as a neat solution to the problem of tradition and the female role in society. There were appeals from government to young girls to enter teaching, nursing and related fields where the services of women were being sought in the country. It was for this reason that her own group had been encouraged to enter the teaching profession and the same would apply to nursing. The war had changed the restrictive role of women in society and the authorities were anxious to prepare boys and girls, young men and women for higher services in the country. This problem had been faced by the British as the supply of manpower from the British Isles for service in the colonies was severely affected by the war. If the Empire was to be run effectively and efficiently, then local manpower had to be developed and encouraged. In the pursuit of this policy, local talents were sought and young people were encouraged to improve their education.

It was a period of considerable change and new opportunities for women as attitudes changed towards their education. Some women had already taken the opportunity to advance their education and were shining examples to the younger ones in Lagos. Those who had this early privilege to demonstrate their intellectual achievements abroad were proudly welcomed back by parents and they earned the universal respect of their fellow citizens. Teaching was an important avenue for individual contributions by this new and enlarging band of well-educated Nigerian ladies. Prominent amongst those who had returned some years earlier from the United Kingdom were Lady Abayomi who taught music

at Queen's College, the late Dr Abimbola Awoliyi who worked as a medical officer at the Lagos General Hospital, Kofo Moore (now Lady Ademola) who was the first Nigerian woman to graduate from the University of Oxford and Mrs Pratt's close friend, Ibironke Williams (now Mrs Doherty) who completed a diploma in teaching and returned to join the staff of the Secondary Department at the CMS Girls School. Mrs Pratt was also teaching there at the time. Another memorable contributor was Stella Thomas (sister to Dr Irene Thomas) who qualified in law and later became a magistrate as Mrs Mark.

However, not all of these highly able and talented ladies were in employment. Some were involved in the voluntary services in Lagos while they remained housewives and supported their husbands. Lady Abayomi and Mrs Ajose (the wife of late Professor Ajose) led a group of ladies concerned with the health education of women in Lagos. The ladies established a kitchen in Lagos where soup and food were provided for members of the British and Allied Forces *en route* to Europe during the Second World War. They contributed to the welfare of members of the forces as well as providing an educational experience in relation to the scores of women who helped them in this singularly altruistic task of caring for the fighting forces of the British Empire. These inspiring backgrounds helped to shape Mrs Pratt's ideas about her own future and possible contribution to the development of Nigeria.

By this time her husband was already in England and she wrote to ask him for the particulars of the School of Nursing at St Thomas' in London. He was excited and rather than find out by letter, he visited St Thomas' personally and asked for an appointment with the Matron! The sight of a handsome Nigerian medical student seeking to see the Matron was not the usual experience for

the office staff. There were moments of doubts and consultations between sisters and perhaps the deputy Matron as was the practice in those days before Matron was informed. Miss Hillyers, the Matron, agreed to see the gentleman and he was ushered into her imposing historic office where the renowned Miss Nightingale had introduced the concept of modern professional nursing.

It is difficult to imagine the encounter in that great office but if Miss Hillyers had been told that the visitor was a Nigerian, she apparently had not shown any sign of it. For this was 1946 when the sight of a black man was a rarity in the St Thomas' setting. She offered him all the courtesy that a visitor would enjoy and he made his request for information about training in the School. Miss Hillyers questioned him about his wife's education, personality and general interests. In the course of this conversation, Mr Pratt offered Miss Hillyers an unsolicited but attractive photograph of his wife! She was clearly impressed with the determination and thoroughly professional approach of Mr Pratt and instantly offered his wife a place, subject to the normal completion of application forms. This mission accomplished, the young gentleman walked tall and left Miss Hillyers having demonstrated an unusual courage and immense charm in facing a seemingly impossible task (even by today's standards) with commendable innovation and a rewarding outcome. He immediately forwarded the forms to his wife in Lagos who was overjoyed.

Mrs Pratt completed all the forms and undertook the compulsory medical and dental examinations and returned the forms to London. After weeks of apprehensive expectations, she received an offer of a vacancy for the Preliminary Training School of June 1946 and was expected to report to Matron's office a few days earlier. The first step in the fulfilment of her ambition had been

taken and she looked forward to her training at the famous school established by Miss Nightingale.

However, all was not smooth-sailing and the June 1946 deadline still had to be met by the Pratts. The war had just ended and with the movement of troops, ship-ping accommodation was severely limited. Eventually, Mrs Pratt got a place on the *Copacobana* and left Nigeria on a four-week voyage to Southampton, England. When she boarded the boat in 1946 in order to join her husband in Britain, she was not surprised to see some of her former pupils *en route* to the United Kingdom to further their education. Some were to become eminent nurses themselves such as Ebun Fasuyi (Mrs Shanu), who became the Chief Nursing Officer of Oyo State, Ayo Otubusin (Mrs Jaiyesimi), Oye Coker (Mrs Akintola Williams) and others in pursuit of higher education abroad. Mrs Pratt's son, Babatunde, was then three years of age and was with her on board. They shared the company of another mother, Mrs Caxton Martins and her son. He, too, was aged three years. However, not all the ladies on board were as mature. For then as now there was a tendency to send children to England in order to complete their secondary education. One such student was the late Miss Okupe who completed her secondary education in Britain and read medicine in Ireland. She returned to Nigeria and married Dr Oluyinka Olumide.

The life on board was great fun but occasionally tinged with fear of the unknown ahead. There were nine women among the men on the voyage and the two mothers shared a cabin while their sons were perfect companions to each other. The younger ladies were 'mothered' by Mrs Pratt and Mrs Martins. The ship was the *Copacobana* which had been converted for the use of troops and was on her last voyage before being broken

up. There were British troops on board and the atmosphere was lively, celebrating the end of the war.

Yet amidst all the jubilations there were moments of reflection for the young mother who was taking a decisive step in life by joining her husband in Britain at such a difficult time. Although Pa Scott was vehemently opposed to the idea of her taking up nursing as a career, he nevertheless made all the arrangements for her and saw her off at Apapa Wharf with the parting words, 'I hope you'll change your mind and do medicine and I'll be prepared to help financially.'

These were the farewell words from her father whom she never saw again. He died in 1949. His death coincided with another memorable occasion as she was preparing to sit for the State Registered Nurse examination in England. But by now he had accepted his daughter's wish to become a nurse and had given her his blessing. She also received moral support and financial help towards the achievement of her goal but the change of attitude by her father was not a gesture to placate the stubborn insistence of his daughter. It was rather the outcome of a visit paid to her by a relation, late Mrs Aduke Howells (wife of the late Bishop Howells of Lagos). She had been on a visit to London and took the opportunity to see Mrs Pratt at the Nurses' Home of St Thomas' Hospital. During the visit, not surprisingly, Mrs Howells had the opportunity to speak to some of the student nurses who were in training with Mrs Pratt. She was surprised at the quality of the young women with higher standards of education and good social backgrounds who yet were training to become nurses. It was her narration of these facts to Pa Scott which resulted in his change of mind and in support for his daughter.

Nursing was also connected in a strange way with Mrs Pratt's passion for history. She excelled in the subject at



school and had taught it in the Secondary Department when she qualified as a teacher. As a serious student of history, therefore, she had taken a particular interest in the Crimean War and the part played by the legendary Lady with the Lamp, Miss Florence Nightingale. She was inspired by the catalogues of her heroic achievements, vision and single-mindedness in overcoming the forces of inertia and human misery. Mrs Pratt had taught her students about the Crimean War and had learnt that Miss Nightingale's grateful nation had given her a gift of money with which she established a School of Nursing at St Thomas' Hospital in London, opposite the Palace of Westminster across the River Thames. As she pondered her future career in nursing, she was convinced that her choice of training school would be St Thomas'.

Mrs Pratt duly arrived in England and was called for interview when the place already offered to her was confirmed for the August 1946 school. Indeed, she was three weeks behind in joining the set of June 1946 because of shipping delay in Lagos. Meanwhile, it was suggested that she could spend the time between arrival and joining the school profitably as she was already an experienced school teacher. Mrs Pratt was given a note to go to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales where she was employed temporarily in the Registration Section under Miss Edwards. This arrangement was due to the initiative of Miss Smyth who replaced Miss Hillyers who had died not long after processing Mrs Pratt's application.

Miss Margaret Smyth, her successor, was a very gentle, soft-spoken and dignified lady, quite unlike the draconian image of matrons which Mrs Pratt's friends had tried to use to frighten her before she left Nigeria. They were immediately aware of a mutually perceived regard for each other and the *rapprochement* which they estab-

lished has endured until this day. The author had the opportunity of speaking to Miss Smyth in her retirement and found her most helpful in giving information about Mrs Pratt's period at St Thomas'. She became a family friend of the Pratts and she still remembers them every Christmas with the annual enquiry about 'the three men' in Mrs Pratt's life—her husband and two sons! This special relationship was shared with many others at St Thomas'. As one of her former colleagues put it to the author, 'Rola Pratt has always been a special person to us, even with Nora "Nuff".'

Nora Norton was the sister in charge of the Nuffield Ward—a male surgical ward for urological problems. The staff jokingly referred to it as the 'waterworks ward' and all feared the strict discipline which Nora 'Nuff' (her nickname given by the students) imposed on her staff. Many had left her ward in tears after they had been taught the virtues of perfection in nursing care. But, as often happens with such strict disciplinarians, she loved and cared passionately for her patients who were mostly elderly and whom she fondly referred to as 'daddies'. The mealtime was particularly a special time on her ward for the routine was organised to provide a high standard of service to the patients. It was traditional at St Thomas' for sisters to serve the patients' lunch and the students queued up to take each patient his food. The newly recruited nurse had a lot to learn and Mrs Pratt was no exception. During one particular mealtime sister asked her to take the food to 'daddy'. As this was her first day in the ward, she was puzzled and could not decide who was 'daddy' among the elderly gentlemen in the ward. A senior student noticed her dilemma and rescued her in time before sister could see what was happening. A grateful elderly gentleman duly received his meal from Mrs Pratt. Sister Nora 'Nuff' is fondly remembered as a good teacher and wonderful and com-

passionate carer by all her former students. The discipline which she insisted upon in the running of her ward was to influence Mrs Pratt later when she, too, had the same responsibility at the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

The period of five weeks before Mrs Pratt entered the Preliminary Training School might have been a trying one for the couple and their son. They all stayed with her maternal uncle who had lived in London for many years. As with every young couple from West Africa with a family, the problem of caring for the children was always a difficult one. The lesson of a closely knit family unit from which they came was soon tested by the challenge of studying and preparing themselves for a future career. The result of this dilemma was the now long-established fostering arrangements which generations of African students have used in Britain and other countries when on further studies. Thus the question of a suitable foster home for Babatunde had to be solved and the Colonial Office was very helpful to the Pratts. Mrs Couldson who had responsibility for female students advised the couple to approach the Victoria League (then housed in Belgrave Square in London) for assistance. Mrs Pratt visited the League Office and met a Miss Kelham who was in charge there for assistance. She made enquiries and this resulted in offers to help the Pratts. One was in Leeds at a vicarage. The couple had two children, and Babatunde, it was decided, would fit in well with their domestic arrangements. The other offer was from the south of England in Guildford some forty miles from London. The lady was a widow whose two children had grown up—the son was in India, while the daughter, Joan, was working and was frequently in the house. Although a religious couple with strong Christian connections, the Leeds offer could not be taken up because of the distance from London.



Mrs Elizabeth Anstee  
UK at the County  
Anderton) and Mrs K.A. Pratt at Hydestile, Surrey.  
Hospital, 1948.

Further enquiries also showed that Guildford was close to Godalming where St Thomas' Preliminary Training School was located and where the students would be nursing at nearby Hydestile in their first year of training. And so Babatunde went to live with his foster mother, Mrs Dodds, in Guildford. Mrs Pratt stayed the first three days with him while he settled down and Mrs Dodds immediately established a loving and caring relationship with the child and his parents. She was a devout Christian and had strong moral principles which pleased the Pratts. Babatunde was taken to church (a mere stone's throw from the house) and was soon established within the church community. He became a 'server' or 'boat boy' and was fully integrated into the home of Mrs Dodds. Mrs Pratt visited him every other day and when she had an off duty. As soon as the set settled down, some of her friends joined her on the trip to Guildford which was fast establishing itself as a shopping centre for local towns. Mrs Dodds had no other children in the house but she encouraged Babatunde to make friends with her neighbours' children.

This was a period of considerable stress for Mrs Pratt and she was supported by some of her friends who regularly took Babatunde out. She was able to be with him often particularly during bouts of childhood ailments such as measles and chickenpox. The Pratts found Mrs Dodds very devoted to their son and in the process, she had, perhaps, a tendency to let him have his own way too often. This created a little problem in adjustment for Babatunde and it might be that the choice of a foster mother who had no other children of the same age was a mistake. Nevertheless, Babatunde enjoyed himself and remembers Mrs Dodds with great affection and high regard. Indeed, he tells the author of his continued interest in her welfare by keeping in touch regularly with her after all these years.

With the family problems partly resolved by fostering her son, Mrs Pratt arrived at Godalming to begin her training. She was accompanied by her husband who was introduced to Miss Gamelin, the sister tutor in charge of the Preliminary Training School. The new students had tea and attended an introductory session to their new lives and were fitted with their uniforms. There followed an invitation into how to make the distinctive cap for probationers. The group itself was a mixed one with the young and the mature and Mrs Pratt was pleased to find her own age group in the set.

This was 1946 when the war had just ended and some women were taking up the threads of their careers which had been interrupted by the hostilities. Others were lively young school leavers between the ages of eighteen and twenty years who were at the beginning of their first careers. These young students were anxious about her admission to the school and often asked her questions about her previous experiences. The older students were understandably more reticent but one, whose parents were English but lived in Kenya, often wondered aloud about Mrs Pratt's abilities. She wanted to know, for instance, where she learnt to speak and write in English because she found it incompatible with her own experiences of girls in Kenya. 'I was privileged to meet two young women from Kenya doing midwifery at the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies. My impression was, given the opportunity, they could perform well, which they did.' Clothes were the source of her colleagues' other curiosity as they found the quality and quantity of Mrs Pratt's wardrobe rather astonishing. It was an era when the African was depicted differently and some could not visualise an African girl in anything other than grass skirts! This level of ignorance astounded Mrs Pratt who had been to a school where education was broad and detailed. The level of ignor-

ance she observed in her colleagues therefore called for education and enlightenment and, as a qualified teacher, she spent much of her off-duty in attempts to explain the lives of people in dependent countries in Africa to her fellow British students. She talked about missionaries and teachers who served and were serving in these countries and tried to convey something of the progress that had been made at that time.

Meanwhile, all the students in her set successfully completed their preliminary training and were moved on to the wards in Hydestile to which patients had been evacuated from London. They continued to live in Goldaming in the Nurses' Home. The Home Sister was a kind lady who took an interest in the progress of each student and readily gave support to everyone. She was aware that Mrs Pratt had a son and often sent flowers to Babatunde in Guildford. Soon everyone was to find out the differences between being in a classroom and the reality of ward work. The rigid hierarchical structure whereby seniors were to be respected was very much in evidence on the wards. The set kept close and very much to itself. They learnt much from ward sisters, charge nurses and senior students. The patients were also sources of education of a general kind apart from the study of their illnesses and the treatment and care they were receiving. It was not unusual for a patient to warn the student nurse, 'Nurse, you'd better not do that Sister won't like it!'

In the mass of materials and experiences to which students were exposed during their training, some events inevitably stand out in retrospect. One such experience was recalled by Mrs Pratt as follows.

I first saw a case of tetanus at Hydestile. I can't quite remember how the patient contracted the disease. He was isolated in one of the empty huts with drawn

curtains. The room was dark and the nurse was gowned and masked. The students were told the importance of keeping strictly to the rules if we were not to contract the disease, too. That was the only case that I ever saw in England. Little did I realise that I would take charge of a ward later in Nigeria where we might have two or three sufferers at a time.

The training was already providing a sound foundation for later practice and responsibility. The students were allocated successively to various wards for experience with one day a week spent in the classroom. The emergencies of the war were already being relaxed and the students moved on to London in order to continue their training. This was their first introduction to the famous hospital with its impressive and historic location by the River Thames.

It was during this period that the Wood Committee (1947) was deliberating on the future of nurses' education in England and Wales. This was in readiness for the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948. The introduction of the block system of training started at this time and Mrs Pratt's set was amongst the first to train under the new system. The students received lectures from their Sisters-tutors and various medical specialists. The senior Sister-tutor, Miss M. Gould, was assisted by Miss Hone who later succeeded her, although this was after Mrs Pratt had qualified and left the School. At this time, the arrival of two Sister-tutors marked an important point in the nursing career of Mrs Pratt. Miss Bell and Miss Tattersall joined the staff and both later served in Nigeria where Miss Bell influenced the career path of Mrs Pratt.

Thus began the nursing career of Nigeria's outstanding nurse whose influence went beyond the country. The

development of that career during her training is a fascinating story and constitutes her life at that great institution—the Nightingale School, St Thomas’.

## Life at St Thomas’

The Second World War had just ended when Mrs Pratt entered the Preliminary Training School at St Thomas’. The consequences of the war were all around and food rationing was still a shattering experience for the British public. Nurses were able to have all their meals while on duty but coupons had to be collected when on days off from the hospital. The welfare of her young son was very much her concern and all her food coupons were passed on to Mrs Dodds at Guildford when she visited Babatunde. This was very much appreciated by Mrs Dodds who was able to provide enough food for the growing child during this trying time. Students were paid quarterly—a stipend then of £12.00 per month and no one ever complained about the size of it. Indeed, pay days were followed generally by shopping sprees which, because of the war, meant no more than window gazing at empty shelves in shops.

There were many problems for learners in the difficult climate of post-war Britain. Mrs Pratt shared in all these but also experienced a personal difficulty. As the first black lady to enter the School, she was distinctive and conspicuous and an ambassador for her race and her country. She realised that some of the people did not have the opportunity to have contacts with people from other races and that allowance had to be made for individual idiosyncrasies of her fellow nurses. As we saw in

the last chapter, Mrs Pratt tried to educate some of her colleagues about Africa and Nigeria in particular. The depth and breadth of her knowledge of British history often surprised her colleagues but she explained her education in a dependent country where history lessons were based on British rather than the indigenous history and culture of the people themselves. And she had taught the history of the British Empire. This knowledge of history, perhaps because of the pre-occupation with nostalgia current at the time, often impressed her colleagues. But the educational background also helped Mrs Pratt to excel in both theory and practice. Her fellow students were mainly girls from the middle and upper classes but the patients came from around the Lambeth area and were mostly Londoners by birth.

The nurses were encouraged by the amiable nature of their patients who often called them 'dearie'. The contrast between the accents of the medical and nursing staff and those of the patients was quite striking—the one polished and cultured while the other was local and natural. In attempts to communicate better with the patients, she tried to imitate their accent but found it impossible to make herself understood. There were special expressions which puzzled her at the outset. For example, when a patient called out, 'Nurse I don't want any afters' or 'What about my afters?' she soon learned that this meant 'desserts' or 'puddings'. There were also moments of disappointment and frustration for her. On one occasion, she was preparing to assist in the bed bath of a patient. All seemed well until the patient bluntly objected to being bathed by a black nurse. This sudden rejection of her caring services shocked and dismayed Mrs Pratt and a colleague later reported the incident to the ward sister who reprimanded the patient. The experience was hurtful, humiliating and demoralising but she carefully considered the matter and realised that



Mrs K.A. Pratt at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, UK, 1947.



unless she faced up to the reality of racial prejudice, it might completely ruin her chances of success in the training. But the ward sister, more in sympathy than anger, tried to explain the situation to the patient. In order to defuse the situation, Mrs Pratt reacted spontaneously by putting a screen round the patient's bed and, in the professional manner, said that she was going to give the patient a bath. The patient offered no objection and the two became friends in the course of the nursing care. This challenge had been successfully overcome and it set the pattern for the rest of Mrs Pratt's approach to her professional development. She realised, too, that trust was essential between patients and nurses and it had to be a mutual experience for both of them. Patients' worries and anxieties were potential sources of distress during hospitalisation and they often talked about these to the nurses who would in turn inform sister in their verbal reports. These individual reports based on interaction between the learners and their patients were important aspects in meeting the needs of patients as people. The sisters and their students together developed the qualities of kindness, sympathy, depth of understanding and caring attitudes which enhanced the development of the human touch and concern. Listening was another essential quality which her training encouraged and nourished in the students for it is a central quality for being a good nurse.

It was a disciplined life to which Mrs Pratt was accustomed from her own upbringing. The junior nurses respected their seniors and were conscious of their status in the hierarchy of the hospital. There was clear segregation between the various grades of staff in the dining room and a junior nurse who momentarily forgot and occupied a wrong seat would be greeted by the studied silence of her seniors. This disciplined outlook may seem pedantic now when any hierarchy is questioned

and resented by some of the young. Yet it was an essential part of the professional preparation of nurses in order to accept the responsibility for the care of patients.

Yet Mrs Pratt's admission to the Nightingale School had not followed the normal Colonial Office supervised route. Officials there were surprised that Mrs Pratt had gained direct entry without their expected intervention, for they normally arranged admissions for all approved students from the colonies who were expected to report to the Colonial Office on arrival in London. It was perhaps fortunate that her admission had been arranged independently for none of those who were placed by the Colonial Office then had gained admission into a teaching hospital.

One of Mrs Pratt's memorable experiences at St Thomas' happened on the occasion of the Commonwealth Conference in London in 1947. She had been summoned to Matron's office in the morning. In the usual hospital atmosphere, every student normally dreaded such a sudden invitation to Matron's office! When Mrs Pratt reported to Matron, she was asked to change her uniform for another one at once. The Colonial Office had requested permission to enable her to join the guard of honour for Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth (now the Queen Mother) who was to open the Conference at Church House, Westminster. The proud Nigerian student nurse at the world-renowned Nightingale School joined the guard of honour and was delighted to be presented to Her Majesty. She was to meet the Queen Mother again many years later at St James' Palace during the celebration of the Royal College of Nursing Diamond Jubilee. The Queen Mother graciously received representatives of the College and those of the International Council of Nurses (ICN). Mrs Pratt was then the Third Vice President of the ICN.

The Royal Family also took part in other activities at



Fellows of the Royal College of Nursing, U. K. at a symposium held at the Leeds Castle, Kent, 1983.

which Mrs Pratt was honored to meet them—Princess Alexandra in 1960 when Nigeria became an independent nation and Princess Margaret in 1981 when she attended the dinner given for the Fellows of the Royal College of Nursing at Leeds Castle, England. Mrs Pratt was admitted to the Fellowship of the Royal College of Nursing at a memorable ceremony in Birmingham in 1980. Amongst the guests who witnessed this occasion were her husband, Dr Olu Pratt and Miss Morrison, MBE, formerly Matron of the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

The career of Mrs Pratt was influenced by a number of people and she fondly remembers their contributions. One of these was the former Matron and Lady Superintendent at St Thomas', Miss Smyth, CBE. A highly professional and dignified lady, she took a keen interest in Mrs Pratt's progress and encouraged her to complete her training in spite of the tremendous pressure on her domestic life. On many occasions when they met along the corridors of St Thomas', Miss Smyth would stop and offer words of advice to the pioneering African student. She would enquire about her husband and his progress at Edinburgh University where he was a medical student. She was fond of their son and many years later, Miss Smyth was to write, 'I admired Mrs Pratt for her courage in taking a nurse training which meant leaving her husband, very small son and her homeland.'

Indeed, life was not easy for her. At an age when her teaching career could have been consolidated, she had changed course in order to help her husband whose future interest was to become a general practitioner. Although she had succeeded in convincing her father of the respectable and worthwhile nature of nursing as she saw it, there were others who did not share her conviction. She met a number of people in England, among whom were the late Chief (Dr) Abimbola Awoliyi and



the late Dr John Akerele. Both were cousins of her husband and tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to change to law or read for a degree in domestic science. They felt so strongly that she would leave nursing and even obtained application forms for courses in colleges for her. All these attempts failed and with the support and encouragement of Miss Smyth and her determination to become a nurse, she was able to continue her training to a successful end.

It is a decision that she has never regretted for it enabled her to make national and international contributions to the development of nursing. In humility, Mrs Pratt recognises that she has been lucky to have received much acknowledgement of her work. She readily acknowledges the crucial role that Miss Louise Bell, a former Sister-tutor at Thomas' played in the development of her career. She had arrived at the hospital soon after Mrs Pratt began her training. The meeting of the two was so poignant that Mrs Pratt remembers it to this day. She was well into her training and was on Arthur Ward one day when she experienced that inexplicable feeling of being watched by someone—that uncanny feeling which often proves correct. She turned round and there was the new Sister-tutor who was supervising three student nurses on the ward. This was a new approach, for tutors tended then (as now) to remain in the school. When she paid direct attention to the Sister-tutor, she realised that the look was one of genuine interest in her rather than of mere curiosity. Miss Bell looked at her with quiet surprise and keen interest. As was customary at the hospital, she responded with a shy smile rather than affected concern and received a reassuring smile. They were to meet again along the corridors of the Nurses Home when Miss Bell was on her way to her apartment two floors above the junior nurses' rooms. As there was no one else around, she took the opportunity

to greet her and was invited to coffee later that evening in Miss Bell's apartment. This was such an unusual event that Mrs Pratt kept the invitation absolutely to herself as close relationships were not encouraged between students and senior staff. Indeed, familiarity with charge nurses (as staff nurses were called at St Thomas') was unknown, let alone with Sister-tutors.

In the evening, the student nurse apprehensively arrived at the door of the apartment and gently knocked. Miss Bell was already expecting her and she stepped in quickly and quietly and though both feared the consequences of the visit, neither seemed prepared to discuss it. Miss Bell then apologised for her rather prolonged staring on the ward. She had just returned from Tanganyika (now Tanzania) and she was delighted to find a young black woman training at the prestigious St Thomas'. She had spent a spell of duty in Tanganyika and worked in the hospital there where she trained nurses. The two ladies chatted animatedly about life at St Thomas'. Mrs Pratt, though obviously made welcome, was eager to return to her lower floor room but she sensed within her the beginning of a life-long friendship.

Although Miss Bell did not invite her again, she continued to show interest in her progress and on her days off, she would visit Babatunde in Guildford and take him out for entertainment. She was also responsible for the annual Nativity play at Christmas that year and brought Babatunde into the play as one of the angels. This involved her in several journeys to Guildford in order to bring him to St Thomas' for rehearsals. This was recalled by Miss Smyth who wrote of 'great joy when one Christmas "Tuns" was able to take part as an angel in our Nativity play. He, also like his mother, was popular among the nursing and auxiliary staff.' Thus the friendship between Miss Bell and her student was firmly established on mutual respect and interest in each other.

It was almost time for Mrs Pratt to leave the hospital and just about then a delegation of expatriate staff of the newly-established University College Hospital, Ibadan, visited St Thomas'. It was headed by Professor Jolly—a female professor of surgery at the University College Hospital, Ibadan. Miss Bell later told Mrs Pratt that the delegation was interested in the recruitment of staff to help in the establishment of a School of Nursing in the new Teaching Hospital. Although she did not know much about the proposed development, Mrs Pratt was delighted that such an event was taking place in her own country. The Colonial Office had set up a high powered commission under Sir Eric Ashby to examine the problems of higher education in the British dependent territories. The Commission had recommended the establishment of a University College at Ibadan and a Faculty of Medicine was to be set up. The College was affiliated to the University of London which awarded its degrees. Students in the Faculty of Medicine could only study up to the Second MB at Ibadan and then came to Teaching Hospitals in London for their clinical years. It was to enable the students to complete the entire medical curriculum in Nigeria that the delegation came to England in order to recruit staff.

But all these developments were transient in Mrs Pratt's professional development. She left the hospital to undertake her midwifery training and then did a course in tropical diseases in London. This was followed by a spell as a staff nurse at the Evelyn Children's Hospital, then under Guy's Hospital, London. She still maintained her contact with Miss Bell but saw very little of her as she was busy as a staff nurse. Then in 1951 Miss Bell telephoned her and suggested an early meeting as she wanted Mrs Pratt's advice on a matter of importance to her. At this time, Mrs Pratt was living in a flat

at Albany Street, London, and therefore suggested the Quality Inn in Regent Street.

During lunch, Miss Bell revealed that she was seriously considering a request from the delegation from the University College of Ibadan and invited her views of the invitation to go out and help. This was a personal dilemma for Miss Bell for she had just returned from serving in Tanganyika and was re-establishing her career at St Thomas'. Moreover, she was already progressing in her work and had persuaded the Principal Tutor to introduce nurse tutors into ward supervision of students. It was, therefore, difficult for her to take off again and return to serve in Africa particularly as she was responsible for the implementation of a new curriculum at the school. 'You know', she said, 'I have no right to think about this Ibadan thing.'

Although she herself knew nothing about the development at Ibadan, Mrs Pratt vehemently supported the move. The challenge was different to that of her recent experience in East Africa and she would find the new experience rewarding. After a few more meetings, Miss Bell agreed and went to Nigeria to see things for herself. She was not committed and if she did not like what she saw, she could reject the offer and settle down at St Thomas'. Yet Mrs Pratt, as befitted a patriot, hoped and prayed this dynamic, professional and dedicated nurse tutor would see the challenge as a worthwhile cause to support. Mrs Pratt quickly sent a letter to Miss Bell telling her the names of those she might meet at Ibadan and, in the meantime, she ensured that these people had suitable briefings about Miss Bell before she arrived in Nigeria. Eventually, she visited Ibadan, liked the challenge ahead and accepted the offer to lead the new School of Nursing—the beginning of professional nursing in Nigeria.

When she returned to London, Miss Bell recruited a

number of tutors to join her staff at Ibadan. Mrs Pratt was invited to speak to the new staff about Nigeria. Because of Miss Bell's strong belief in the need for prevention of diseases, she included a public health nurse tutor. She also appointed a deputy principal, Miss Eunice Tattersall, herself a product of St Thomas'. She was to give distinguished service to Nigeria and later established two further teaching hospital Schools of Nursing at Ahmadu Bello and Lagos universities.

Miss Bell continued to keep her friend and mentor in touch with developments at Ibadan both by letter and personally when home on leave in England. She was concerned that few students were being recruited not because of the shortage of suitable applicants but because the girls with better educational backgrounds did not wish to undertake nursing. The limited scope in nursing for professional and personal development worried young educated girls. They saw their fellow students entering higher institutions with the prospects of brighter careers and many did not wish to spend their lives as staff nurses. Moreover, in the Colonial Nursing Service, only British expatriates could become sisters and this prospect discouraged many able girls who might have been attracted to nursing at the new teaching hospital. All these thoughts were shared between the two friends but much more was in Miss Bell's mind. She was convinced that if Mrs Pratt were to accept the post of a nursing sister at the hospital with her education, social background and professional experience, the students and prospective recruits would see that a Nigerian could indeed be a nursing sister at UCH. This would overcome the dearth of recruits into the new teaching hospital.

Miss Bell returned to Nigeria and urged Professor Jolly to offer Dr Pratt a registrar's post in the Orthopaedic Department in order to get his wife to join him and accept a post at Ibadan, too. The plan failed, how-

ever, as Dr Pratt refused the offer since he was interested in general practice on his return home. But he had no objection to his wife accepting a post at Ibadan if it would help, particularly as Miss Bell had herself made sacrifices in order to serve Nigeria. The advertisement was placed for nursing sisters at UCH and copies were sent to St Thomas' in case others were interested.

Meanwhile, Mrs Pratt's professional development continued apace. She received a letter from St Thomas' offering her a Nightingale Fund grant to undertake the Ward Sister's course at the Royal College of Nursing in London. She had not applied for this grant but Miss Bell was clearly determined to prepare her well for the future role at UCH. The role which Miss Bell and Miss Morrison (appointed Matron of UCH) played in the career of Mrs Pratt is important and will be considered in later chapters.

But St Thomas' was also a place where many friends were made by Mrs Pratt. The records show that amongst those with whom she came into professional contact as a student were Miss Young (Sister on Arthur Ward—a male medical) where she learnt her medical nursing and became a devoted nurse. Miss Charles was the Sister on Florence Ward who contributed so much to her training. There were Miss Woodhead (Casualty Department and City Ward), Miss Lovely—Sister Lilian of the Children's Ward and her successor, Miss Gwen Kirby. The latter became the Matron of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. The influence of these paediatric sisters was strong and led to Mrs Pratt's acceptance of a Staff Nurse's post at the Evelyn Children Hospital. As a mother, she was quite natural in her dealings with children and enjoyed paediatric nursing but her first love, apparently, was medical nursing to which she returned.

Among the students with whom she was very close was Elizabeth Anderton (now Mrs Anstee) who was a set

above her at the school and yet managed to reach out to her and became a life-long friend. Although they were in touch for many years without physical contact, a few years ago when Mrs Pratt had a major surgical operation at the London Clinic, her old friend came back directly into her life. Mrs Anstee invited her to convalesce at her home in Great Livermere, near Bury St Edmunds. She and her husband Dennis looked after her and encouraged her rehabilitation. Dennis had been in the Army and retired a major after a spell of duty in the Middle East where Elizabeth had been with him. It was a reunion of immense satisfaction as these two friends shared their experiences of life at St Thomas'. They have continued to meet regularly.

The memories of St Thomas' linger on, not just for the many colleagues and others who shared the experiences, but for the more intangible aspects of a student's life in London. The visits to theatres became regular features of life as complimentary tickets were given to Matron's Office for their students. Mrs Pratt and her friends went to theatres a lot and with the effects of the war lessening, eating out was a regular pastime for them—Italian, Chinese, Greek, Indian and French food were sumptuous and enjoyed by the students. It was great fun learning the art of eating with chopsticks in the Shaftesbury Avenue Chinese Restaurant. There were bad times as well, of course, but even these were good as well in retrospect for they bring much joy and laughter when remembered today.

## Establishing a Base for a Career in Nursing

The excellent general nurse training provided at the Nightingale School was a passport for life but Mrs Pratt realised that it was not an end in itself. For a nurse who intended to practise in Nigeria, midwifery was (and still is) an important professional preparation. In deciding to pursue a midwifery training, Mrs Pratt followed in the footsteps of famous Nigerians for, as far back as 1912, Miss Ore Green and Miss Abimbola Gibson were two pioneering Nigerian midwives registered with the Central Midwives Board for England and Wales. Indeed, by 1930 it was clear that a midwifery profession was essential in Nigeria and the Central Midwives Board of Nigeria was established in 1931. So midwifery received professional statutory recognition before general nursing, for it was almost two decades later in 1949 that the Nursing Council of Nigeria was itself established.

A year after this momentous period of nursing history in Nigeria, Mrs Pratt entered the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies in London. She successfully completed the Part I Midwifery Examinations in 1951 and proceeded to take the Part II training at a district clinic in London, run by an Anglican Order The Sisters of St John the Divine in Deptford. The clinic provided a

charitable base for midwifery care in the south-east of London. The choice was in the event a most important one, for it brought Mrs Pratt face to face with the squalor and poverty of the destitute and under-privileged Londoners. Thus, after the splendid and immaculate hospital surroundings of St Thomas', the midwifery practice in the district revealed the other face of health care for the citizens of London.

Mrs Pratt worked in a district which stretched as far as Brockley, Lewisham, Poplar and Deptford in the south-east London. The pupil midwives were based in a hostel behind the Sisters' House and the mothers were seen, examined, and advised by an obstetrician while the pupil midwives learnt their craft directly by observation and participation in the various activities. This was three years after the end of the Second World War and the effects were still being seen in the district, especially Deptford and Poplar, both of which were severely ravaged by bombs. Living conditions were terrible for the inhabitants and some families lived in Nissen huts in the cold and grey surroundings of the vast tenements. Nevertheless, the experience of St Thomas' was helpful for, apart from the sophisticated patients admitted for treatment, the hospital also catered for the less privileged Londoners from the Lambeth area. However, this was in hospital, and the student nurses had very little idea of the conditions in the homes from which their patients came and their real lives.

Midwifery training on the district changed all that for here the stark reality of deprivation and poverty had to be faced by the pupil midwives. The care demands were also much greater in surroundings that were far from ideal or congenial. Yet it was to be a most rewarding experience for Mrs Pratt and her fellow students. Although poverty was visible in the district and many of the houses were derelict because of the effects of the

war, the clients seemed to earn good wages. The problem was how to order their priorities, for while some of the children were badly clothed, the houses were sometimes well furnished. This was a challenging experience for the midwives who not only had to support the women through pregnancies and deliveries, but had to advise the parents on how best to order their priorities.

Mrs Pratt recalled that this was not very difficult for the midwives to accomplish. Despite their limited education, the clients had immense survival experiences. For most of the mothers, their first visit to the clinic was usually during the third month of pregnancy and only a few would turn up just one week or even a day before going into labour. The clinic was under the constant management of an obstetrician to whom the women were referred when they booked in. The obstetrician also saw the women at intervals until the delivery of their babies. The students were under the charge of Sister Magdalene who was responsible for the day-to-day running of the clinic. The pupil midwives were assigned the responsibility for visiting the pregnant women at home to decide whether the houses were suitable for home delivery. This was important in order to ensure a reasonable standard of environmental hygiene before the babies arrived.

The women were given lists of requirements in preparation for their babies when visited at the sixth month. Another visit would be made the following month by the 'nurses', as they were fondly called, when the items would be checked. These were invariably displayed by the mothers—beautiful and expensive looking *layette* and other items all ready for the arrival of their babies. Yet at the actual delivery a couple of months later, none of these items would be available for the care of the new babies. The cause of the vanished items bothered the 'nurses' but investigation revealed that the mothers were

being clever in order to have their babies at home. For home delivery would only be approved on the seventh visit by the midwife if the listed items were produced. As the women naturally wished to have their babies at home, they had to produce these items for inspection. In order to overcome the problem, some of the women would hire these items from the shops for display on the day of the midwife's visit only to return them as soon as home delivery was approved!

The desire to have their babies at home was very strong in the women and they were well supported by the presence of grandmothers who also assisted the midwives during delivery. These were the days when families were well integrated and these grandmothers were an indispensable support for their counselling functions and in ensuring the safe delivery of their grandchildren. There were light-hearted moments, too, when missing items were required and granny would be asked only to say, 'Ask Penny' and Penny, when asked, would start a spontaneous labour 'pain' and thus avoid the need to answer awkward questions.

In spite of their economic deprivation, the ingenuity of the mothers was a major source of fascination to the students and their supervisors. Mrs Pratt recalled all these experiences with warmth and respect for these clients whom she regarded as kind-hearted and co-operative. The close relationships between the midwives and their clients were fostered by the routine post-natal care. They were nursed for 12-14 days, twice a day for the first half and once daily for the second half of the period. The kindness and thoughtfulness of the families always touched Mrs Pratt. Even when parents could not afford babies' nappies, there was always a 'nurses tray' which was set up with teacup, teapot, sugar, milk and light refreshments. By the time the nurse had completed the care of mother and baby, granny would have made the

nurse's tea and supplied biscuits or a rock bun. The refreshments were dutifully brought in at the end of the visit.

This hospitality was offered with warm generosity of heart and could never be refused without offending the family. The sister and her students used the opportunity to advise, counsel and inform the family on matters of managing the welfare of the mothers and their babies. However, as several families were visited, so many cups of tea were consumed with the result that a rush to the hostel and the loo finished each day!

The period on the district was also quite revealing to Mrs Pratt. She discovered a problem which she had not suspected nor realised could be a handicap to her. In order to cover the area of her work in Deptford, she was provided, along with other pupil midwives, with a bicycle for transport. Unfortunately, Mrs Pratt's encounter with this mechanical aid was not successful for she discovered (much to her surprise and annoyance) that she simply could not maintain her balance on the bicycle. After several brave and determined attempts, she often had to abandon the bicycle for a taxi so that babies did not arrive before she reached the houses! There were inevitable falls and bruises until she finally accepted the fact that cycling was not, after all, one of her strong points. In any event, the district midwifery course was completed and along with her long-cherished friends from St Thomas', she was duly qualified as a State Certified Midwife.

What to do next was not a problem because of the desire to return to Nigeria and practise as a nurse. It was clear that tropical diseases were different in many respects, though Mrs Pratt had never been inside a hospital in Nigeria before she came to England. Indeed, she was aware that there was an 'African' (later called 'General') Hospital in Lagos. She had seen it because



Mrs K.A. Pratt on district midwifery service in Deptford area, England, carrying the child delivered by her.

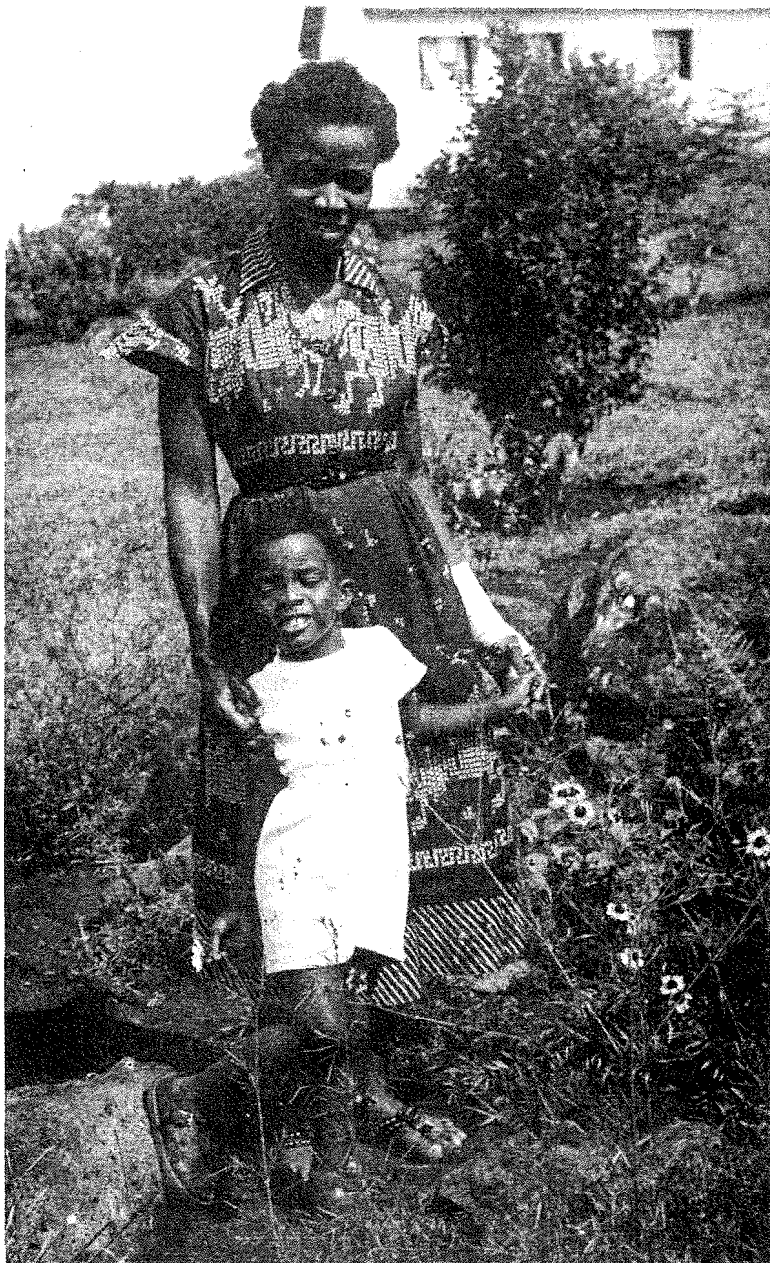
it was just across the road from the Young Women's Christian Association (YMCA) of which she was a member. But she had no idea what the inside looked like nor of the activities which went on behind its closed gates. Mrs Pratt admitted this with considerable embarrassment but she had never been ill enough at that time to require hospitalisation. Minor family illnesses were treated by 'private' doctors who were called to the house by their parents. Occasionally, they would visit the doctor's surgery but never the hospital. And so when she qualified as a registered nurse and a certified midwife, she realised that the training would lack credibility if she did not undertake a specialist course in tropical diseases.

Mrs Pratt entered the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in St Pancras, a specialist part of the University College Hospital, London. The course consisted of six-months theory and practice during which the students received lectures from eminent physicians in tropical medicine who had practised in Africa and India. The practical experience was not entirely new to Mrs Pratt because of her previous qualifications. She also found that having been a teacher, she was readily receptive and was able to assist her fellow students in learning the new techniques.

The patients were mostly those who had been out in the tropics and returned with tropical diseases of various types. The students learnt a great deal from them, especially about treatment and nursing care in hospitals in Africa and other tropical countries. At the end of the intensive six-months course, Mrs Pratt and her colleagues took the final examinations and were successful.

Thus in the four years between 1950 and 1954, Mrs Pratt had qualified as a midwife, gained the certificate in tropical nursing, worked as a staff nurse in a children's hospital, completed a Ward Sister's course at the Royal College of Nursing and finally returned to St Thomas' for further experience. This was no mean task and,





Mrs Pratt and her younger son, 'Femi

amidst all these activities, she gave birth to her second son, Olufemi. By those who knew and worked with her, Mrs Pratt was admired for her courage and tenacity of purpose. No one, perhaps, is more qualified to express this admiration than her former Matron and Lady Superintendent at St Thomas' Hospital who was instrumental in shaping her future career. Miss Smyth, CBE, a former Chairman of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, was contacted by the author at her Sussex home. Now well into her eighties, she spoke on the telephone with remarkable memory of her able former student whom she held in high esteem. A week later, she wrote in a letter:

'I admired Mrs Pratt for her courage in taking a nursing training which meant leaving her husband, very small son and her homeland. From the very early days of her nursing course, she proved to be an enthusiastic and hardworking student with a friendly attitude towards all her patients and keenly interested in their treatment and progress. She soon showed ability in her studies and the promise of future leadership. Throughout her training, in spite of being parted from her small son, she never once asked for "special leave" to visit him, but managed to do this in her spare time. I have always kept in touch and have followed her career and progress from a distance and have been delighted to learn of her achievements and awards which she so rightly deserves.'

In a sense, Mrs Pratt had been fortunate to have had the right opportunities in her professional preparation as a nurse. Yet, it must be conceded that in a biblical sense, 'Many are called, but few are chosen' and of the few so chosen, some would fail to grasp the opportunities when they are presented. What must be clear by now



is that one of the strengths of Mrs Pratt, from the time she decided to follow her husband to Britain to her success in becoming a qualified nurse and midwife, is the sacrifice in putting her first profession behind her in order to take up a new one. Teaching was undoubtedly a more respected profession for her and she could have done much more, if she had wanted to, with her acknowledged intellectual ability. But she decided to be a nurse, devoted years of hard work to realising that ambition, and now the future posed a challenge to her. That challenge had to be faced either by assisting her husband to establish his general practice or by providing a wider service to the country. Whatever she decided to do on her return to Nigeria, it was clear that she would do it to the best of her ability.

## The University College Hospital, Ibadan– Nigeria's Premier Teaching Hospital

As we saw in Chapter 5, Miss Bell had accepted the challenge to go and start the new School of Nursing at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan. She was anxious to make a success of the mission and set about planning the recruitment of high calibre staff to help in the task ahead. Miss Bell had enjoyed the friendship of Mrs Pratt at St Thomas' and they had respected each other. It was not surprising, therefore, that Miss Bell wanted her trusted Nigerian friend to join the new and exciting challenge to establish a teaching hospital training for nurses in Nigeria. But she was a nurse tutor now appointed to head the new school at UCH, Ibadan, while Mrs Pratt was already set on an administrative path. For quite unexpectedly, she was awarded the Florence Nightingale grant which enabled her to take the Ward Sister's course at the Royal College of Nursing in London. This had prepared her for appointment to a Ward Sister's post in Britain, yet ironically the colonial policy meant that she might not secure such a post in her own country.

For Miss Bell, however, it was clear that only the presence of a capable Nigerian nurse as a Ward Sister would give the indigenous nurses confidence in themselves and

act as a source of encouragement for professional advancement. For these reasons, she was determined to recruit her as a nursing sister for UCH.

The nursing posts at the new hospital were advertised and a copy of the advertisement was sent to Mrs Pratt in London. She discussed the application with one of her trusted colleagues, Elspeth Bowden, who had expressed an interest in going to Nigeria during their days at St Thomas'. They both decided to apply and promptly forwarded their completed application forms to the recruiting agency. The selection board (which comprised representatives of London teaching hospitals) met in London and appointed a Matron for the new hospital. The Board then interviewed other prospective staff among whom were Miss Bowden and her Nigerian friend, Mrs Pratt. These interviews were conducted on behalf of the UCH in London and the newly appointed Matron, Miss Morrison, former Matron of Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow, was introduced to Miss Bowden and Mrs Pratt. The interviews over, Miss Bowden was offered a post as Ward Sister on the children's ward because she was a Registered Sick Children Nurse (RSCN). Mrs Pratt was appointed sister for the medical ward. Her preference for a male medical ward was also noted.

The two appointees were examined at the London Clinic and both pronounced medically fit to practise in the tropics. This amused Mrs Pratt who had come from the tropics but it was all part of the preparation for serving in the colonies as a sister and being the first one to be so appointed, she was given the full briefing along with her expatriate colleagues. The Crown Agents later provided literature for the two newly appointed sisters on how to cope with life in West Africa, regarded then as the 'white man's grave'. This included information on how to take quinine to prevent and treat malaria, to wear boots in order to avoid snake bites and to dress for

dinner! It was a matter, not simply of amusement but of surprise when Mrs Pratt noted the way she was being treated by the Crown Agents. Of course, a Miss Bowden and a Mrs Pratt were supposed to be non-Nigerians and officials at the Agency treated both recruits as such.

This was clearly a confusion which was not helped by the fact that recruitment of Nigerians was undertaken locally in West Africa directly into the Civil Service there. However, UCH, as a new institution, had not followed this procedure and, in any event, they had to recruit directly from London for their initial staff to run the new teaching hospital.

Miss Bowden was ready in a matter of few weeks and she left for Nigeria. Meanwhile, Mrs Pratt had to take care of her first son, Babatunde, who was old enough to proceed from his Lanesborough preparatory school in Guildford, Surrey to a Boarding school in Woking. Olufemi was fifteen months old and Mrs Pratt decided that he was far too young to be left alone in England. Thus the two sons were separated and with Dr Pratt already a medical officer with the Commonwealth Development Corporation in the Cameroons, the family was split three ways. In the summer of 1954, some nine years after her arrival in Britain, Mrs Pratt's sojourn came to an end. She left Liverpool by boat and returned home to Nigeria.

As the boat sailed away in the grey morning that eventful day, the dawn of a new era was apparent to Mrs Pratt. She was thoughtful and reflective and departed from Britain, no doubt conscious of the challenge ahead. As we have seen, she had not just had opportunities open to her but had struggled to create them and had been remarkably fortunate to grasp them decisively. Moreover, events of the decade in Britain had changed her life and the future, though uncertain, was at least challenging. There would be sacrifices, testing times and



At the University College Hospital, Ibadan 1958. Miss Irene Morrison (Matron) and Mrs. Rola Pratt (Deputy Matron).

demands on her personal and professional resources. The *MV Aureole* sailed along on its fourteen days' voyage to Nigeria and, on board with her son, Mrs Pratt reflected on how she had faced similar uncertainties when she sailed for Britain nine years earlier with Babatunde in search of the 'Golden Fleece'.

On a bright August day in 1954, the boat docked at the harbour in Apapa. There were friends, relations and well-wishers at the quayside to greet Mrs Pratt and her son. She was naturally elated to be back home but saddened that her father was not there to receive his devoted and loving daughter. It was he alone who saw her off when she left for Britain and his absence was a cruel reminder of the total loss of one so dear to her. Dr Pratt was hundreds of miles away in the Cameroons and could not come to Lagos to meet his wife and son. The occasion was a significant one for the entire family and a Thanksgiving Service was held at the Cathedral Church of Christ, Marina, to offer gratitude to God for the safe arrival of Kofoworola Abeni in Nigeria. A moving visit to the grave of Pa Scott, her late father, concluded the immediate events surrounding her return to Nigeria. She laid a wreath in his memory.

This was followed by a month during which she visited her husband in the Cameroons before returning to Lagos to prepare for her new post at the UCH, Ibadan. On 6 October, 1954, Mrs Pratt, accompanied by her son and a Nanny, reported to Miss Morrison, the Matron of the UCH. She was immediately posted to the medical ward to begin her nursing career in Nigeria. But a major crisis soon developed because Mrs Pratt had not been allocated any accommodation. Miss Morrison, more in sympathy than anger, offered Mrs Pratt and her son the use of her spare room. This helpful concession was soon to create another major problem. For Mrs Pratt was faced with the dilemma of a colonial administrative seg-

regation of expatriates and indigenous staff. She was shocked to find that the few Nigerian professionals appointed by the hospital—doctors, physiotherapists and radiographers and now herself—were housed separately in one block of flats. Perhaps this was not a deliberate segregation but one evening, Mrs Pratt visited her colleague from London, Miss Bowden. They had been recruited together and Miss Bowden remarked on the length of time that it had taken the authorities of the UCH to accommodate Mrs Pratt. She told Miss Bowden that she had at long last been allocated a flat in the block behind hers, to which Miss Bowden replied, ‘So they’ve put you in the *‘African Block’*’.

This came as a rude shock to Mrs Pratt and she could hardly conceal her astonishment and anger. She had been accepted at St Thomas’ as a partner in health with full status and respect for human dignity. In her nine years in Britain, she had been treated with courtesy and had not experienced overt prejudice. Now back in Nigeria her own country she faced open racial discrimination! Philosophical but deeply wounded emotionally, she proceeded to prepare her new flat for occupation but found it completely uninhabitable. She was furious and went to see Miss Morrison who immediately inspected the flat herself. She expressed astonishment at the condition of the flat allocated to a newly recruited sister from England. She immediately took the matter up with the House Governor, Brigadier Brading, who found it a sort of ‘much ado about nothing’ and, in a military fashion, stuck to the official line. He was not surprised and could see nothing wrong as another Nigerian had just vacated it.

Mrs Pratt refused to accept the flat and was staunchly supported by her Matron, Miss Morrison. Finally, Brigadier Brading conceded that the flat had been neglected and ordered that it be redecorated for Mrs Pratt. This

first challenge was overcome with determined resistance from Mrs Pratt, backed by Miss Morrison’s professional loyalty. Yet no sooner had this crisis passed than another one loomed large for the newly arrived Nigerian ward sister.

As we saw in Chapter 6, the interview in London had established the specific clinical interests of the two recruits—Miss Bowden for the children’s ward and Mrs Pratt for the medical ward. It was understood that Mrs Pratt would be posted to the male medical ward particularly because of her performance at the interview and at the request of the professor of medicine who had received a report of the interview. The background of the new appointee had clearly impressed the professor. She had been described as an educated, mature, professional and a St Thomas’ trained nurse. Neither the name nor the credentials suggested that the newly appointed sister was not British but a Nigerian. The name and credentials fitted the professor’s expectations but clearly not the colour of the new ward sister.

At this time, Mrs Pratt was staying temporarily with Miss Morrison while her flat was being redecorated. She noticed that the professor visited Miss Morrison in the evening though he was unaware that Mrs Pratt was staying there, too. One evening, the moon was shining outside and the quiet surroundings of the matron’s bungalow provided a perfect setting for a general discussion between Mrs Pratt and the Matron. The professor arrived and was welcomed by Miss Morrison while Mrs Pratt quietly slipped away unnoticed into the bedroom. The door was left open between the two rooms and, as the professor disclosed the purpose of his visit Mrs Pratt listened with utter incredulity.

He told Miss Morrison that the colonial sister (who was British) was not up to the job on the ward and he had been impressed by the qualities of the newly-appointed

sister—on paper! But he confessed that he had not realised that this new sister was black. The name, her qualifications and references were first class but she was black and he would, therefore, prefer to maintain the status quo on his ward. So even though he confessed that the white sister was not capable enough to cope within a teaching hospital setting, the professor said he would rather retain her than take the new Nigerian sister. Mrs Pratt heard everything and was utterly dismayed. It was the second rebuff in a week and she was quite shocked. Miss Morrison listened to the professor and was calm, incisive and determined in her response to what she regarded as an outrageous idea.

She flatly refused to change the posting and pointed out that she had been most impressed with the newly-recruited ward sister whose performance at the interview in London had been exceptional. She rejected the request and asserted that since she did not interfere in the posting of medical staff, she could not entertain any interference as her responsibility was to the Board of Governors and *not* to individual professors. As the professor left, Mrs Pratt and Miss Morrison returned to their respective rooms and did not talk about the incident. The professor's nocturnal mission had shocked them.

The next day Mrs Pratt deliberately avoided any contacts with the Matron as she did not wish to add to her obvious embarrassment. Miss Morrison left for the hospital and about an hour later, she sent a message to Mrs Pratt and asked her to get changed into her uniform and to report to Adeoyo Hospital. This was a change in the original plan for it was agreed that Mrs Pratt should first settle herself and her son before resuming duty. She changed quickly and reported to Matron who introduced her to an all-white administrative staff who welcomed the new sister. Miss Morrison then invited Mrs

Pratt to accompany her to the male medical ward. She was introduced to Dr Lauckner who was second in command of the ward—the medical consultant. Matron then introduced her to the Ward Sister as her replacement. She was to hand over the ward to Mrs Pratt and to report to her office. Other meetings followed the next day and finally the ward sister was posted to the Outpatients' Department where she worked with two other sisters and Nigerian staff nurses.

This episode, though traumatic for Mrs Pratt, hardly affected her professionally. She was immediately committed to the work and was determined not to let Miss Morrison down. Alas, she found the ward rather depressing and uninspiring. She had trained in a hospital where standards mattered crucially and now found herself in a position to do something for her own people but faced with the sheer absence of any demonstrable standards, she wondered where to start. Here was the challenge she had thought about but the enormity of it was quite intimidating. She refused to be demoralised for her training and experience had prepared her for a challenge. She was convinced that the situation was abnormal and decided on a personal crusade to change the image of nursing in this, the first teaching hospital in her own country. She looked at the patients and their surroundings and could only see those wards thousands of miles across the river from Westminster in London with orderliness, care, compassion and humane approach to patient management. She was determined that this Nigerian ward would be elevated to the same standard.

Adeoyo Hospital was a local government hospital which suffered from the chaotic problems characteristic of such institutions. The hospital, as demanded by its emerging teaching hospital status, was staffed by doctors and nurses from the colonial service. The government

in Britain had ensured that such staff were available from the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, when Mrs Pratt arrived at Ibadan, she was proud to learn that brilliant Nigerian doctors had worked at Adeoyo. In particular, two exceptionally able Nigerian physicians had made great strides in the establishment of medical services in the hospital and in Nigeria generally. The late Sir Samuel Manuwa and Dr Gabriel Richard Akinwade Savage made immense contributions and were respected by their expatriate colleagues. The expatriate doctors themselves worked with dedication and commitment and one in particular, Dr Dale, was much praised for his services to his patients at Adeoyo.

What about nursing, Mrs Pratt's own profession? Although there were areas of hard work and dedication expatriate nurses in the colonial service did not in general provide examples to be emulated by the Nigerian nurses. For whereas Nigerian doctors had qualified from abroad and shared the same intellectual, academic and professional traditions as their expatriate colleagues, this was not true of the nurses at Adeoyo Hospital.

The challenge for Mrs Pratt was quite clear. She was determined to change the face of the male medical ward so that human dignity and professional care were her priorities. She had a strong supporter in Miss Morrison who had shared her enthusiasm for change and had high hopes for her. Indeed, the Matron's recollection of this period is well illustrated by what she remembered of the deliberations of the recruitment committee which appointed Mrs Pratt in London

Mrs Pratt was the first Nigerian applicant with a sound educational and professional background. The Committee was impressed from the beginning. She was distinguished from the rest by her courage in travelling so far from home, with a small child,

to undertake a training as rigorous and demanding as nursing and midwifery. At that time a married nurse was rare in the UK; and one with a child unknown. Even the war years had failed to break down down the barriers to married women many had been accepted for the war effort. Mrs Pratt must have had exceptional qualities to be accepted at the most famous hospital and Nursing School. St Thomas' Hospital with the Nightingale Training School was renowned for its nurses. Perhaps only single women training at that time can understand the strength of character and determination required to train at the Nightingale School.

Miss Morrison had been impressed by the modesty of her newly recruited Ward Sister in London but she recognised her confident ability and professional qualities which would be needed in the challenges ahead. Thus she supported and encouraged Mrs Pratt as she began the arduous task of changing the ward. In order to help her, a small amount was voted for this purpose and her first task was to organise a re-painting of the ward. The colour, recalled Miss Morrison to the author during conversations was originally dark green which was unashamedly designed to mask any dirty spots on it and thus conceal any lapses in hygiene standards. The walls were now painted cream colour so that any dirty marks or soiling could be seen and cleaned in order to prevent cross-infection. The traditional red blankets, usually too hot in the tropical climate and visually distressing, were changed to light cotton damak as bedspreads or counterpanes. The bed screens, filthy from neglect and lack of use, were painted in bright, attractive and agreeable colours and were put into use to ensure privacy when treating patients. The ward became bright and cheerful and patients were encouraged to maintain the new environmental cleanliness.

Mrs Pratt was now satisfied with the general environment of the ward and moved into the store room in which the professor's old X-rays and empty bottles were kept. The room was messy and crowded. It was sorted out, cleaned and re-painted. The room was later converted into a small ward kitchen for the use of patients. This was fitted with a stove and a small Belinda oven and Mrs Pratt ordered and obtained crockery, cutlery, trays, glasses and other utensils for the use of patients in the ward.

The changes were dramatic and instead of being evolved over a period of time, they represented a revolution in patient care by nurses. They were swift and no one had had time to resist in the hospital and the ward. Yet food was still brought in by patients' relatives as the UCH was not allowed to set up a catering service at Adeoyo Hospital because it was on loan temporarily until the new teaching hospital was completed. The provision of these new facilities had to overcome other problems as well. Patients' relatives normally brought the food to the ward and proceeded to serve and feed the patients. This was often chaotic and unsatisfactory. It was the next area of improvement and Mrs Pratt acted decisively. She instructed her nurses to receive the food from relatives on arrival, label each with the patient's name, warm it in the kitchen if required and serve it attractively to each patient. This resulted in all patients receiving their meals together at the same time. It also enabled her and the staff to see what food each patient received and thus judge the nutritional value to the patient. Where it was found that the food brought in was deficient in any way, advice was given to relatives on the appropriate food beneficial to the patient.

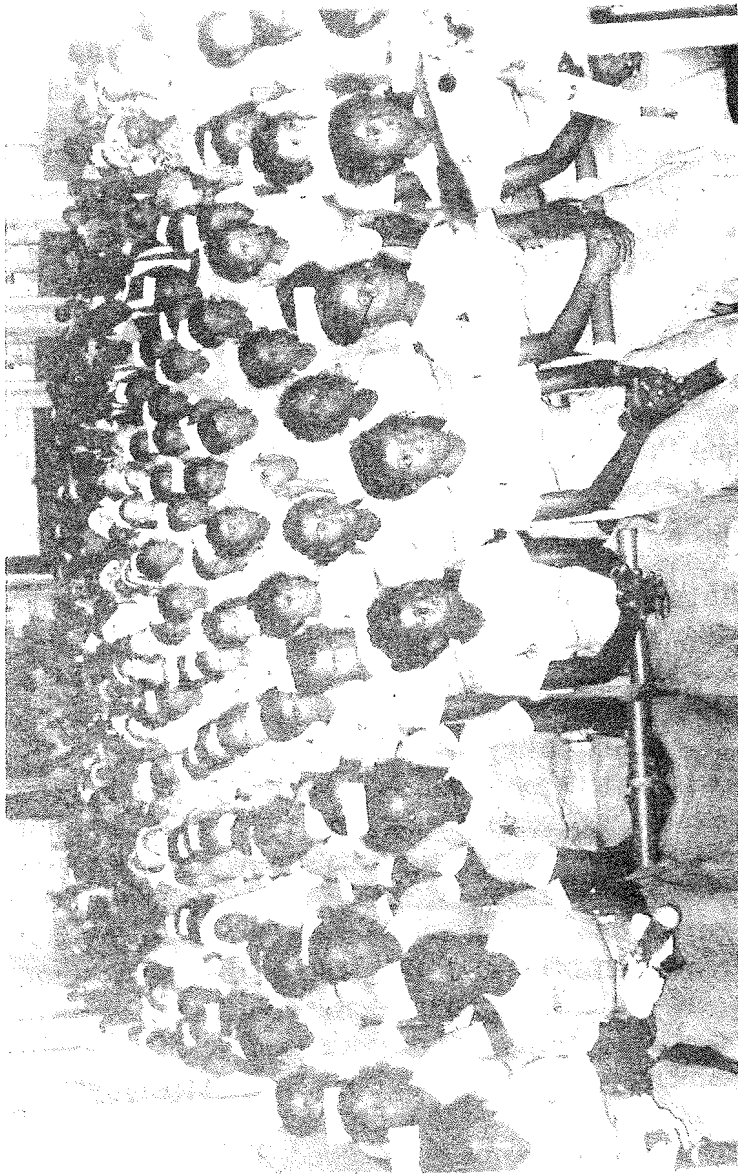
These innovations represented considerable change in the hospital but such was Mrs Pratt's ability to communicate her ideas that these were accepted with minimal resistance.

The staff learnt not to ignore environmental cleanliness and patients, in recognition of the new order warned one another not to put dirty hands on the walls or make the floor and their surroundings dirty. The ward was bright, cheerful and spotless and the patients and relatives showed their appreciation.

At this time, student nurses at the School of Nursing, UCH, were allocated to the medical ward and they learnt to support the new arrangements. They brought flowers for the ward and encouraged the patients to maintain the standard of cleanliness. This had a profound effect on patient care and the ward environment was a happy and congenial one for patients and staff. As a former teacher, however, Mrs Pratt also enjoyed teaching the students and took great pains to explain treatment to her patients.

Adeoyo was a local government hospital and so it had male nurses on its staff. Some of these men were allocated to Mrs Pratt's ward. They were at first mostly bewildered by the changes and some even questioned whether such changes would last in the face of local problems. Indeed, the male nurses resisted some of the changes, but then they soon found that they were beneficial and strictly enforced by Mrs Pratt. As with any innovation, there were some unexpected problems. For instance, the arrangement for food supply was for nurses to collect and label each item of food after following the relative to the bedside to identify the recipient. But within a matter of days of introducing the new system, it was obvious to the relatives that it could be simplified. And so, quite intuitively and independent of the ward arrangements, they began to bring their visiting cards along so that patients were more readily identified and thus the time of the nurses was saved. This contribution demonstrated the willingness of the relatives to support the changes being introduced.





Student nurses from the School of Nursing, UCH, Ibadan, at a graduation ceremony.

And so orderliness, cleanliness and comfort for the patients were swiftly achieved on the male medical ward. Miss Morrison recorded these changes for posterity:

Her impact on the ward was evident from the first days. There were goats, hens, cockroaches and dirt to be dealt with. Mrs Pratt drove herself and, like it or not, staff had to keep up the pace. Mrs Pratt was in command—she had authority as Ward Sister because she understood her function and had the professional knowledge, practical skill and ability to be accepted, even by the doctors.

She recalled, too, the reaction of Mrs Pratt to the first day when she was introduced to the male medical ward:

She did not exclaim in shock or horror. Her only comment, 'There is a lot to be done!'

The impact was not just on the health of the patients but on a re-education of corrupt ward servants who demanded and accepted money in order to give patients bedpans and attend to their personal hygiene. They were losing a lot of money with the new disciplined approach to patient care and, understandably, they resented Mrs Pratt's intrusion into their cosy and rewarding arrangements. Indeed, there was little training of staff. Supervision was also poor and there was nothing to inspire or encourage the nurses. The nurses carried out doctors orders and did no more for their patients. The arrival of the new disciplined and professional approach changed all that and some staff, unable or unwilling to accept this new regime, asked for transfer. But, as Miss Morrison now recalled, the intelligent nurses saw the changes as beneficial to patients and staff and stayed on to learn from their new Ward Sister. The medical and administrative staff watched with admiration as sweeping





Col. Robertson House Governor (UCH) toasting to a drink  
with Mrs K A. Pratt (Matron)

changes were introduced all around the male medical ward.

That accomplished, Mrs Pratt next turned her attention to the general problem of ward administration. This was perhaps the most difficult as it involved the medical staff, starting with the house officers, registrars, consultants and later the professor of medicine himself. During the first six weeks on the professorial ward, Mrs Pratt worked with Dr Jack Lauckner who was a reader in medicine. He specialised in general medicine and had a particular interest in the management of tuberculosis. There were twelve patients on the verandah with tuberculosis under Dr Lauckner. The two of them worked together and he appreciated most of the changes introduced. The professor himself was off to one of the villages where research was being conducted, an arrangement he put into effect when it became clear that Miss Morrison was determined to put Mrs Pratt in charge of the male medical ward.

There was no need to worry about the professor who was away—much remained to be done in his absence. The house officers were to be organised for ward work. Mrs Pratt noticed that they visited the wards at awkward times for their rounds or in order to carry out medical examinations or obtain specimens from patients. Nurses were expected to wait on them and were treated with less than professional respect for their trouble. The registrars were themselves too busy to be concerned about ward administration which was entirely neglected. They visited the wards according to the times available to them during otherwise busy days with clinics and research activities sandwiched between ward rounds. All these were unsatisfactory and Mrs Pratt sought to organise the ward administration.

Mrs Pratt arranged a meeting with Dr Lauckner, the reader, and discussed her plans with him, particularly

aspects which affected the medical staff. She went away and carefully planned the way she saw the ward administration and presented it to Dr Lauckner for his comments. The plan was comprehensive and far-reaching. It included the training of student nurses and the medical contribution to this clinical responsibility. In addition, she suggested that the times of the medical rounds for each category of doctors were to be stated, including those for the collection of specimens. A system of medical emergency calls was also to be introduced. She planned all these around the patients' care and she, as their custodian and advocate, was determined to ensure that they were properly cared for by doctors and nurses alike.

Dr Lauckner was impressed and felt that the professor ought to be brought into the discussions. Mrs Pratt had not particularly included the professor in the plans because of the knowledge that he had not wanted her to be posted to the ward. But she did not object when Dr Lauckner suggested that he should be called into the discussions in that early stage in her plan. Professor Brown was introduced for the first time to Mrs Pratt by Dr Lauckner. Although they had not met before apart from the encounter in the Matron's bungalow, Professor Brown had visited the ward at night and was aware of the changes being introduced. The night staff had discreetly informed Mrs Pratt.

This knowledge provided an opportunity for a starting conversation and Mrs Pratt did not miss it. She asked the professor whether he was pleased with the changes being introduced to the ward to make it more of a teaching hospital standard. Professor Brown immediately responded with appreciation and, quite unexpectedly, handed a bunch of keys to Mrs Pratt. He explained that they were the keys to the various cupboards which contained medical equipment. Thus the two became pro-



Professor Alexander Brown, (sitting in the centre) Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ibadan, with male medical ward staff. UCH, Ibadan. 1961

fessional colleagues and great personal friends. He supported her and when she moved to a new post in the new hospital, she continued to enjoy his confidence and support. As the Dean of the Medical School and Professor, he was a powerful man but he found Mrs Pratt a lady with determination, knowledge, skill and tremendous charm. Miss Morrison who had stood firm between the two when difficulties had arisen was to write in later years,

Professor Brown was the first to appreciate the changes and eventually recorded that Mrs Pratt was the best Ward Sister he had ever known either in Britain or Nigeria. His support and encouragement were invaluable.

As Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Professor Brown had a powerful position on the Senate, and he threw all his influence behind Mrs Pratt when she decided to fight for university education for nurses in Nigeria in later years. The doctors were generally opposed to the idea of graduate education for nurses while academics had open minds and were willing to be convinced by the arguments. This aspect will be taken up later but in this, as in everything else she did, Mrs Pratt was fully accepted, not because of her colour but rather because she proved herself an able and determined person who worked hard and with single-minded dedication to her duty. She believed in and practised what she preached.

In 1955 after fifteen months in charge of the male medical ward, a vacancy for an administrative sister was to be filled at UCH. Miss Morrison recommended Mrs Pratt to the Board of Management in the following memorable way,

Mrs Pratt has shown from the beginning of her appointment the ability to plan with foresight and to train others to be methodical and to work to a



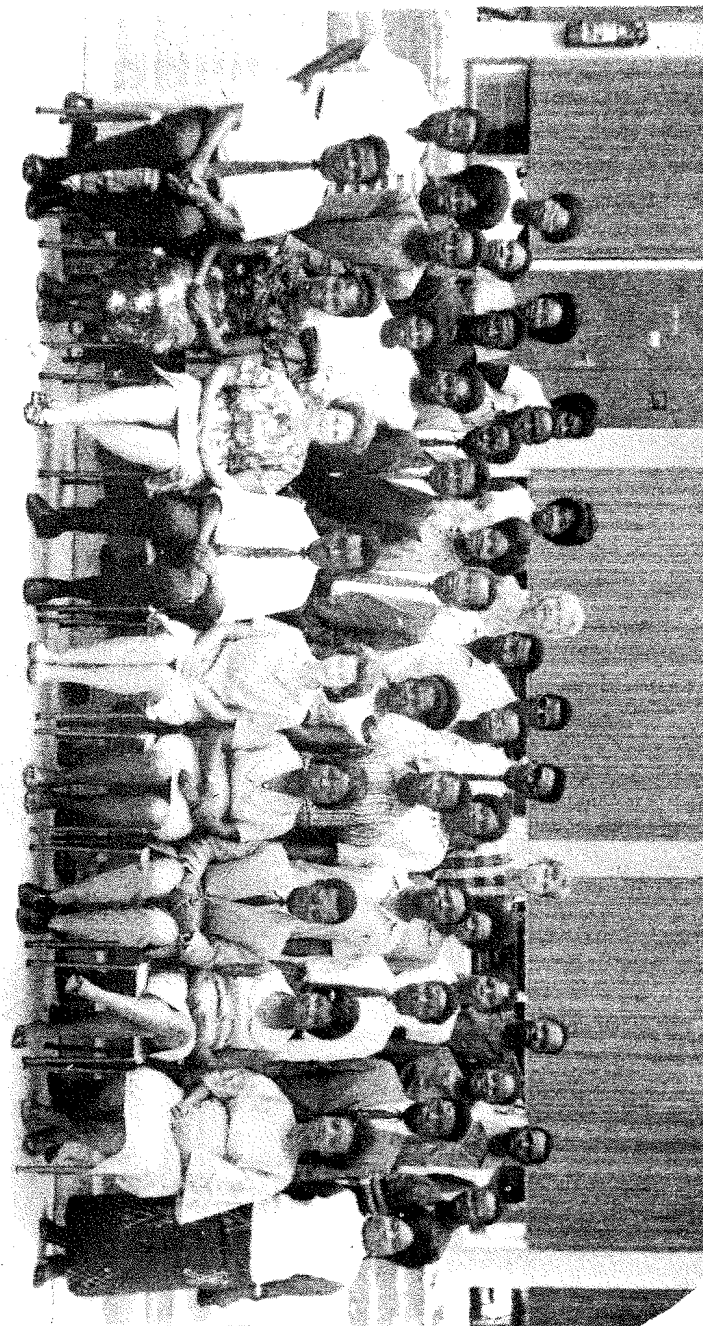
Professor Brown and his medical staff serving the Xmas dinner. 1961.

routine. She has proved to be a most able Ward Sister and has the capacity for administration and organisation.

The Board approved her appointment to the post of Administrative Sister with effect from 21 November, 1955. Mrs Pratt moved into the Matron's Office and joined an expatriate Administrative Sister. It was characteristic of the vision of Miss Morrison that she saw the need for a Nigerian point of view in the many decisions that were being made at the UCH for preparation of the new hospital. This initial opportunity gave Mrs Pratt the opportunity to chalk up yet another first—the first Nigerian to head the Premier Teaching Hospital in Nigeria. Of course, such achievements though the rewards of personal hard work reflect wider co-operation with others who developed the unique institution of UCH at that period of Nigerian medical history. Prominent amongst these contributors were Professor Alexander Brown who died and was buried at Ibadan, Dr Lauckner and Miss Morrison. But there were others no less important, the late Dr Low who became Dean of the Medical School at Edinburgh University, Dr Money (later Monekoso) who was Dean of the Medical School in the Cameroons. They were both registrars of sterling qualities for whom Mrs Pratt retained much affection. Amongst the Nigerians who were at the UCH, then Dr Audu (later Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University and Federal Minister for External Affairs), Dr Dosekun (later Provost of the College of Medicine, University of Lagos) both of whom were house officers at Adeoyo Hospital.

Many of today's senior Nigerian nurses passed through Adeoyo/UCH as students during Mrs Pratt's time there. The distinguished group included Mrs Remi Ogunlana (née Johnson) who later became Matron at

Staff and students, Dept. of Nursing, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, May 11 1969 with Miss Mary Abbot (as Head of Department)







From left: Dr Agbaje, Mrs K.A. Pratt, Dr Lowe, Chief Rotimi Williams and Miss Irene Morrison.



From left: Miss Goodwin, Mrs Adebo, Miss Morrison, Miss Mitchel and Miss Richmond (who took over from Miss Morrison).

UCH, Mrs Lola Alade (née Thomas) the present Principal of the School of Nursing at the UCH, and Mrs Nwangu who later moved to become senior nurse at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital in Enugu. Dr Victoria Mojekwu, now of the World Health Organisation Regional Office, Brazzaville and Mrs Nancy Obayan currently completing a doctoral programme in the United States were two former students of the institution. All these former students have been source of pride to Mrs Pratt over the years, for their achievements have been rewarding for all who were involved in their training at Nigeria's first teaching hospital.

Mrs Alade looks back to the period with some pride, too, and told the author,

My personal memory of Mrs Pratt, first as a Ward Sister when I was a student nurse and later as Deputy Matron when I was a Staff Nurse, is that of a very diligent, meticulous and totally dedicated nurse. She did not only strive towards the highest ideals in the nursing profession, but was also committed to passing this professional idealism to all those entrusted to her charge and future generations of nurses in Nigeria.

Mrs Pratt had been a Ward Sister and an Administrative Sister in quick succession and for each post, she had proved able and competent. The brief encounter with Miss Bell at St Thomas' had led her into a most rewarding but challenging opportunity to serve her people. But she was not content to see nurse administration practised without the preparation for it and progress for the profession must continue with renewed dedication.

## Progress in Nursing: Development of Higher Education for Nigerian Nurses

The remarkable relationship between Miss Bell and Mrs Pratt produced some of the momentous achievements in the latter's career. As we have seen, it was Miss Bell who shaped the early nursing career of Mrs Pratt by encouraging her towards the Ward Sister's post at UCH. She was particularly emphatic in letting Mrs Pratt realise that progress in the nursing profession in Nigeria was the ultimate responsibility of Nigerian nurses—not the expatriates. Her watchword for this progress was education and she encouraged Mrs Pratt to widen her professional interests, particularly in nursing education. The desire to do so was naturally strong in one who had herself qualified as a teacher before taking up nursing. In 1956, the Board of Management of the UCH approved a study leave for Mrs Pratt and she returned to Britain to take the Nursing Administration course at the Royal College of Nursing in London. This was successfully completed and she returned to UCH after one year to her Administrative Sister's post in the Matron's Office. Soon after her return, however, the Assistant Matron, Miss Hurst, resigned her post and Mrs Pratt with her newly acquired educational qualification in Nursing Administration and demonstrated ability was duly pro-

moted to the vacant post on 18 December, 1957. It should be remembered that this was the immediate pre-Independence era and many expatriates in all aspects of Nigerian life were already aware of the 'wind of change' which was blowing across the country.

Before she left for the course in London, Mrs Pratt had joined Miss Bell and a few other expatriate nurses in the discussion of a professional nursing association in Nigeria. One of the expatriates at the time was Miss Molly McClelland who was a ward sister at UCH and later an Assistant Matron. She recalled the period following Mrs Pratt's return in 1957 as one of bursting excitement,

There was much activity at the UCH and Mrs Pratt was involved in the discussions which led to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales approving the registration of nurses trained at the UCH. She was fully involved and was instrumental in setting up the Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria (PATNON). She invited nurses in Nigeria to be professionals.

The quest for professionalism in nursing was uppermost in her mind and in 1959, she was encouraged by Miss Bell to apply for the coveted Carnegie Travel Grant awarded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This was normally reserved for award to academics. Miss Bell had been herself the first and only nurse to receive the grant previously and she clearly wanted the best for her developing Nigerian *protegee*. Mrs Pratt was persuaded to apply for the grant in 1959. One of her referees for the award was Professor Brown with whom she had first worked as a Ward Sister after the unfortunate episode of rejection. It is important to see this support in the light of that earlier experience because it showed Mrs Pratt's ability had overcome his initial

opposition. Professor Brown wrote to the Carnegie Corporation in 1959 in support of the application and noted,

The Adeoyo Hospital, with its inadequacies of accommodation, equipment and staff, presented a great challenge to those who had come to pioneer the new medical school, and work in it called for adaptability, a good deal of capability for improvisation, ingenuity, a thorough professional knowledge, and, above all, a sense of humour. Mrs Pratt provided all these and was the best medical Ward Sister with whom I have worked either here in Nigeria or in Britain.

Professor Brown also stressed her personal qualities.

She is [a] vivacious, charming, clever woman with authority and the capacity for command, qualities not too common in educated Nigerians. She is without doubt the outstanding Nigerian nursing personality and I can think of no more profitable way for the Corporation using its resources than in enabling such a person to widen her insight into, and experience of, nursing education and its problems in America and elsewhere.

With such glowing support and Mrs Pratt's equally outstanding achievements, she was duly awarded a Travel Grant by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Board of Governors of the UCH granted her nine months paid leave of absence to enable her to accept the award with effect from 29 August, 1959. The award was tenable in the United States but three additional countries were added. The Carnegie Corporation included Puerto Rico and Jamaica at Mrs Pratt's request as the Puerto Ricans were carrying out experiments in health services' administration which she thought could be

helpful to an emerging country like Nigeria. Jamaica she included because it was a British colony which was covered by the Ashby Report on Higher Education in the Colonies. The country had also recently established a University College Hospital and training school for nurses in Kingston, its capital. The Travel Grant covered six months and the World Health Organisation (WHO) added a further three months to enable Mrs Pratt to observe nursing education and administration in Scandinavia and Finland. The Board of Governors of UCH also granted her permission to cover the European visit.

And so for nine instructive months, this experienced nursing administrator had the opportunity for a cross-continental examination of nursing services and health management under different socio-economic conditions. The British training had provided a solid yardstick against which these systems could be measured, but Mrs Pratt was determined not to allow her background to interfere with her objective assessment of the American system and those of the Scandinavian countries and Finland. She had an open mind which was to obtain information about the various educational and administrative developments and to use these to inform the unique development she envisaged for her country.

Altogether, the six months visit to the United States covered eight States during which she was able to observe university schools of nursing as well as those outside the university system. The programme was particularly rewarding and reflected the meticulous attention of the Head of Nursing Services in Washington, Miss Lucile Petry Leone. She was also responsible for the earlier visit of Miss Bell as a Carnegie Corporation grant-holder. The sheer size of the country and the diversity of its health systems overwhelmed the eager visitor but everyone she met was helpful, information

and proud of their particular way of organising nursing education and administration. There were many people who contributed to the success of the visit among whom were Miss Kathrine Ford, Mr Alan Pifer and Mr Stephen Stackpole all of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, academics in the United States and Canada concerned with nursing education and professional associations throughout the countries she visited in the USA and Europe.

Mrs Pratt was inundated with a massive collection of literature from the various institutions she visited. Her trip to Europe was equally helpful and produced an additional experience for comparison with the USA and Nigeria.

On her return to Nigeria, Mrs Pratt settled down to a hard, reflective look at the experiences of the Travel Grant. She examined the objective and subjective data in the masses of literature before her and carefully analysed the issues in the light of the needs of the Nigerian nurse. She compiled and produced a well-balanced and reasoned report for Miss Morrison and the Board of Governors. She noted the changes that could be made in the organisation of nursing education and administration. The complete clarity of the report was appreciated by the Board, and Mrs Pratt was invited to discuss aspects of the issues she had raised with the Administration. In the report, Mrs Pratt clearly had something to say about higher education for nursing since this was the predominant system she observed in the United States. Much of her visit had been devoted to seeing something of university education for nurses. The UCH Board of Governors noted these subsidiary issues but as they were considered outside the orbit of the Board these issues were largely not taken up.

However, the matter did not rest there, for Mrs Pratt's trusted friend and mentor, Miss Bell, committed herself



to the cause being championed by her favourite nurse. She was highly respected by the academic community at the UCH and she began to canvass their views about the future of higher education for nurses in Nigeria in the light of Mrs Pratt's comprehensive report. Although these early soundings achieved little in terms of demonstrable results, they nevertheless brought the issue to the fore and concentrated the minds of a number of interested academics.

Meanwhile, Miss Bell moved on and this time to the important post of Nurse Adviser to the WHO Regional Office for Africa based in Brazzaville. This office covered Africa, south of the Sahara. When Miss Bell assumed office in Brazzaville, she was soon faced with the problem to which Mrs Pratt's report had earlier drawn attention in Nigeria. She found that the question of higher education for nurses had been discussed, not only among the staff of WHO, but had formed part of the agenda at the meeting of the Ministers of Health in the Region. Miss Bell noted that the idea had been agreed in principle and that its implementation was a matter of time rather than of will. It was anticipated by the WHO that the programme for a baccalaureate education for nurses would be bilingual (English and French) in order to accommodate students from English and French-speaking countries of the Region. The question was really one of location of the new centre for higher education for nurses.

It was here that Miss Bell's influence could be brought to bear on the decision-making machinery. The University of Ibadan, already well-known around the world, was suggested as the location of the new venture. However, another project was being considered by the WHO at this time and the then Nigerian Minister of Health who was in attendance saw little merit in the location of a project in higher education for nurses in Nigeria. He

therefore favoured the more prestigious medical project—no doubt because his advisers who were doctors and administrators had a low opinion of nursing as an academic discipline.

There was no nurse adviser on delegations in those days and the interest of nursing was always peripheral. In the event, the Minister suggested that the prestigious medical project should be pursued by Nigeria and the nursing one allowed to go to Dakar University in French territory. All these had taken place before Miss Bell arrived at the office and it would seem that major disagreements on locations caused the matter to be shelved. When she arrived at Brazzaville, Miss Bell saw the relevant file and, armed with a knowledge of recent events in nursing in Nigeria, she revived the project for discussion.

Meanwhile at UCH, Mrs Pratt continued her relentless but deserved march to the top of her profession in Nigeria. On 17 March, 1961, some five months after Nigeria's Independence, she was promoted Deputy Matron of the UCH—a powerful position for a Nigerian nurse. Miss Bell was already anxious to see progress towards the implementation of the WHO project and contacted Mrs Pratt to use her influence in order to get the acceptance of the project for Nigeria. With characteristic determination and capacity for hard work, Mrs Pratt accepted the challenge. However, she needed political support for the idea and, quite fortuitously, a change of ministers had taken place at the Federal Ministry of Health following Independence in 1960. The new Minister of Health was Chief Dr M. A. Maje-kodunmi—a well-known and respected Lagos obstetrician and gynaecologist. The new Minister, as a doctor and one familiar with nursing, departed from the entrenched medical disregard which doctors almost invariably had for nursing. He was highly supportive of

nurses and midwives. Mrs Pratt decided to go directly to him in order to enlist his support for the new cause.

This frontal, direct approach was pragmatic but reasoned because the proper constituted channel would have involved bureaucratic red tape and muddle and medical surveillance. This would be a recipe for failure and Mrs Pratt had no such word in her vocabulary. And so she by-passed, not just the medical hierarchy at the Ministry but the Chief Matron (Miss Grogan, an expatriate). She sought the help of another expatriate friend, Miss Stella George, a West Indian colonial Matron at the Island Maternity Hospital. Miss George was close professionally to the Minister who was a consultant at the Hospital.

Dr Majekodunmi was himself known to Mrs Pratt, but she was cautious in her approach in order to ensure the success of the mission to bring university education for nurses in Nigeria. She was, of course, in continued contact with Miss Bell in Brazzaville and they both believed that the University of Ibadan was the appropriate location for the WHO project. Miss George agreed to introduce Mrs Pratt to the new Federal Minister of Health and the two ladies met him at his private address in South West Ikoyi in Lagos. Mrs Pratt wasted no time in putting her views about the project and she was supported by Miss George.

The Minister was sympathetic and impressed by the case put forward and promised to raise the matter at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers in Brazzaville. The matter seemed settled there and Mrs Pratt returned to Ibadan with quiet optimism that the project might be brought to Nigeria. Clearly, in all walks of life, many important and beneficial deeds are accomplished, not by incessant minuting of views and counter-views, but by a mixture of reasonable diplomacy, politics and established bureaucracy. The use of this channel is open

only to a few and its service, when it is used in the interest of common good, is universally recognised as a way of overcoming inertia and promoting progress.

The meeting with the Minister was a considerable achievement which was to be followed quickly by other activities. Mrs Pratt knew that only by intense professional, personal and official pressure would the goal of bringing university education for nurses in Nigeria be reached. The next meeting of Ministers in Brazzaville was a matter of weeks away and as she made her way back to Ibadan, she pondered the best approach to achieving her most cherished wish for nursing education. Two possibilities were open to her and each had its merits in the pursuit of the goal. The first was to visit Brazzaville herself and see Miss Bell. This was too overtly intrusive and so was rejected. The Minister had agreed to see Miss Bell in Brazzaville for further briefing which was good news but clearly left too much to chance.

In the event, an alternative course of action was decided. Mrs Pratt decided to ask Miss Bell to pay an official visit to Nigeria during which she would have an opportunity to meet the Minister in Lagos for discussion on the matter. This would also enable Mrs Pratt to be directly involved in the explorations rather than to leave the matter to an official delegation in Brazzaville for whom nursing was not a priority. And so Miss Bell duly visited Nigeria and had official meetings with the Minister and his staff. But a behind-the-scene meeting had been arranged by Mrs Pratt during which Miss Bell joined her to see the Minister at his Ikoyi residence.

The secrecy which surrounded the exercise was important because of the danger that the Chief Matron might oppose the developing initiative. As a nurse from Britain where graduate education for nurses was not favoured then; it was feared that Miss Grogan would almost certainly oppose the idea. Miss Bell's visit with Mrs

Pratt to the Minister was successful. He once again expressed his interest in the project and listened to Miss Bell's views with interest. Dr Majekodunmi promised to do all he could to bring the nurse education project to Nigeria. The following day, both Miss Bell and Mrs Pratt paid an official visit to the Minister in his office with the Chief Matron in attendance. The project was not discussed at this meeting except for vague references to the need for better educated nurses in Nigeria.

Eventually, the Minister attended the Brazzaville meeting and, convinced of the good the project would do for nursing in Nigeria, he argued the case for it to be sited in Nigeria. The Ministers agreed that two such projects of higher education for nurses could be established—one for English-speaking countries to be located in Nigeria and the other to be sited in a French-speaking country of the region. The battle at the WHO had been won by Dr Majekodunmi, and his medical advisers had not interfered, as Mrs Pratt had feared they might do. The groundwork had been thoroughly carried out and the Minister saw the project as a source of national pride. He clearly shared Mrs Pratt's philosophy of higher education for Nigerian nurses.

Yet this was just a beginning as officials and the Federal Government had to be convinced, too. The Federal Ministry of Health was asked to proceed with the liaising activities with the WHO. It was at this point that serious problems arose, for the academic community at the University of Ibadan did not see the merit of such a project as part of the University's development. Miss Bell saw this opposition as formidable and potentially damaging to the carefully nurtured cause; she urged Mrs Pratt to use her good offices and speak to the dons. It was now that another aspect of Mrs Pratt's ability came into use. A former expatriate nurse at UCH, Miss McClelland, watched the politics at this time and noted,

Mrs Pratt had first-class connections with prominent people in government and the university. She spent much of the time working behind the scenes, travelled frequently to Lagos, put the whole of herself into her work. Consequently, she had great influence over consultants and was fearless.

All these she now directed at the academic community in order to get support for the project. She turned to Professor Brown for help and he supported her enthusiastically and was instrumental in convincing his fellow academics that there was a place for nursing within the University of Ibadan. The Vice-Chancellor at the time, Professor Kenneth Dike, was initially sympathetic, too, and encouraged by his wife (who was a nurse), he too became convinced of the benefits Mrs Pratt saw in the project. These activities achieved the desired result in that the University of Ibadan accepted that nursing had sufficient academic contents for it to be within the university but it could not be accommodated for another five years. This was not because of any residual resistance but simply because there was no provision for a nursing department in the current development plan. However, if the government could provide the necessary funds, Senate would consider the establishment of a department of nursing in the University.

The struggle continued at the international level, for the money required could not be provided by the Nigerian government at the time. At this point, the WHO became involved because Miss Bell was an official of the world body. There were intense diplomatic activities designed to attract funds for the project. After months of protracted negotiations and discussions at national and international levels, three institutions of international standing became interested in the project. They were the Rockefeller Foundation, United Nations Chil-

drens' Fund (UNICEF) and Boston University. The Rockefeller Foundation donated the building of the Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan. This followed months of negotiations supported by one of its officials, Miss Virginia Arnold. The Foundation also gave grants for students to enable them to pursue degree courses in the USA in order to prepare local staff for future work in the new department. The UNICEF grant provided funds for students from other English-speaking countries to undertake nursing courses at the University of Ibadan and to enable academic staff from Boston University to help in the establishment of the new department. Miss Bell was in the background working with Mrs Pratt and others in order to bring the project to fruition.

And so in the academic year of 1965, the first group of undergraduates arrived at the University of Ibadan to begin the historic advancement of nursing as an academic discipline in Nigeria. The three-year course would lead to the BSc (Hons) degree in nursing and the course was open to both male and female students. This latter point is worth noting, for the School of Nursing at UCH itself strictly excluded male students but university education must of necessity depend on academic ability rather than the individual's gender. It was perhaps not surprising that academics had not taken nursing seriously since it projected the image of an all-female occupation with the inherent subservient role which that sometimes generates.

The university had full control of the curriculum which was developed by the staff from the University of Boston. The Department itself was placed in the Faculty of Medicine and staff from the medical school co-operated in the development of the biomedical sciences part of the programme. Although the project started with the Federal Ministry of Health's involvement, once the

Department was established, all its activities were part and parcel of the academic community of the University of Ibadan. The Federal Ministry of Health retained its interest in the programme by liaising with the Rockefeller Foundation, WHO and UNICEF and some aspects of the Boston University connection.

By now, the international stature of Mrs Pratt had grown considerably. She attended the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress in Australia in 1961 as President of the Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria, a post to which she had been elected. In 1962 she accompanied Miss Nussbaum, General Secretary of ICN, on her visit to Nigeria. Further international experiences followed, including her election to the Board of Directors of the ICN, in which capacity she attended its meeting in Geneva, in 1963.

Back in Nigeria, events were moving faster in the immediate post-Independence era. In January 1964, Miss Richmond, Matron of UCH following Miss Morrison, resigned her appointment to return to the UK. Four years after Nigeria became an independent country in 1960 (and exactly a decade since she became a Ward Sister at UCH), Mrs Pratt was promoted to the substantive post of Matron, University College Hospital, Ibadan. The historic date was 7 January, 1964. This great honour was very popular amongst all sections of the hospital staff. Miss McClelland, who witnessed the change-over, noted the respect and awe with which Mrs Pratt was held by nurses at the UCH. She counselled, encouraged and supported them through difficult personal and professional development.

As noted above, being at the right place at the right time played some part in the advances made by Mrs Pratt, as with most people in the immediate post-Independence period. It was indeed a period of great opportunity for able Nigerians, as expatriates handed

over to Nigerians in the Nigerianisation era and those with proven ability in all spheres of Nigerian life were justly rewarded. It may be argued that Mrs Pratt's education, social background and connections were important factors in her favour. For those without such connections but who succeeded nevertheless, it might be tempting to underrate the importance of personal initiative which could be more important in those with the advantages if they were not to miss opportunities. In 1965, the post of Chief Nursing Officer to the Federation became vacant. The search was on for a successor to the departing expatriate. A consultant paediatric surgeon at the Lagos General Hospital at the time, Dr Graham Douglas, recalled,

When the Federal Government of Nigeria began to look for someone in the nursing field to take charge of its nursing and midwifery services, Mrs Pratt was called upon to perform that duty as the first Nigerian Chief Nursing Officer of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mrs Pratt was appointed to the post on 3 May, 1965 and assumed office three months later on 3 August, 1965. Now at the helm of nursing affairs in Nigeria, she was able to play a particular and open role in the formative years of the Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan. At UCH hers had been very much an enabling, facilitating and essentially background role, whereas as CNO of Nigeria she had the official position and authority to back up her deep-seated interest in the success of the project. The course was due to start in October 1965 and three academic nurses from Boston University arrived to enrol the new undergraduates. They were led by Mrs Howard-Taylor and they joined the Department of Nursing within the Faculty of Medicine.

It has been planned to send local nurses overseas (to

the USA) to study for degrees and then return to assume responsibility for the programme at Ibadan. While arrangements were being made to choose suitable nurses for this purpose, Nigeria suffered a severe setback with the outbreak of the Civil War. This experience delayed any progress on the selection of suitable nurses to undertake degree courses abroad. However, the then Western Region of Nigeria already had four graduate nurses. These young women had benefitted from the foresight of the Region's Head of Service at the time (Chief Simeon Adebo) who had agreed on technical aid with the Canadian Government. This enabled the four nurses to obtain the Bachelor of Nursing degree from McGill University. The nurses had later returned to work in the health services of the Western Region.

The presence and potential of this core of graduate Nigerian nurses was recognised at once by Mrs Pratt. As her office was responsible for the co-ordination of the work of the American staff and other resources for the project, she decided to act. She recommended to the Federal Ministry of Health a request to the Western Region Government to second these four graduate nurses to the programme at the University of Ibadan. Three of the nurses were seconded:- Mrs Tubi (now Senior Lecturer), Mrs Adebo (first professor of nursing in Nigeria) and Miss Kujore (now Head of Department of Medical Rehabilitation at the University of Ife).

All these efforts at national and international levels were brought to fruition on the official opening day of the new Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan. It was a grand affair and a fitting start to the history of higher education for nurses in Nigeria. Professor Kenneth Dike had left the Vice-Chancellorship and was succeeded by Professor Adeoye Lambo. He maintained the same enthusiasm for the project as his predecessor had done. The first group of students graduated in 1968.



Mrs K.A. Pratt hosting dinner for guests in Lagos, with the Minister of Health Dr Eyf Adetoro attending, 1969. From left: Miss Alice Girard (ICN President); Mrs K.A. Pratt (Nigeria's CNO) and Miss Sheila Quinn (ICN Executive Director).

Chief Dr Majekodunmi was still the Federal Minister of Health and was a proud Chairman of the ceremony. In order to ensure instant international connections for the new Department, it was essential that distinguished international nurses be present. The Ministry approved Mrs Pratt's recommendation and a number of international nurses were duly invited. The President of the ICN (Miss Alice Girard) and Miss Sheila Quinn, the Executive Director who had visited the country before, were both invited by the Ministry. The Rockefeller Foundation was represented by Miss Virginia Arnold who had worked so closely with the Ministry on the project while Miss Bell represented the WHO Africa Region and the Chief Nurse at the WHO, Miss Lyle Creelman came from Geneva.

Miss Sheila Quinn, now President of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, remembers the occasion vividly.

It was during Rola Pratt's term of office with ICN (as third Vice-President) that I made my second visit to Nigeria. This was to accompany Alice Girard, ICN President, on a week-long visit, the highlight of which was the Opening/Graduation Ceremony of the Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan—one of Rola Pratt's visions for the development of Nursing in Nigeria. She met us in Lagos for the drive to Ibadan and in spite of the Biafran conflict, all the celebrations went well. It was a happy occasion with a number of well-known international nurses, including Lyle Creelman, then Chief Nurse, WHO. Rola Pratt presented a life-sized hand carved statue of Florence Nightingale by a Nigerian sculptor to the library of the Department of Nursing.

The carving mentioned by Miss Quinn still stands in

the Library of the Department as a source of encouragement to those who pass through that institution. The university eventually took over the programme and relieved the Federal Ministry of Health and the international benefactors of their responsibilities. As Chief Nursing Officer, however, Mrs Pratt remained a member of the Education Committee within Senate. The early enthusiasm generated by the vision of a thriving and productive department of nursing would seem to have been lost in the last twenty years of its existence. It had been hoped by the pioneers (Mrs Pratt and Miss Bell) that the programme would fulfil the need that was felt for tutors, administrators and clinical nurse specialists. In particular, it was hoped that the specific needs of psychiatric and public health nursing would have been met by now. Mrs Pratt had been disappointed and laments the failure to establish post-graduate courses for master's and doctoral studies within the Department. The future remains a hopeful one, however, and the international reputation already established by the Department is one that Mrs Pratt is justly proud to acknowledge. The establishment of the Department in 1965 acted as a major source of professional and intellectual development for nursing in Nigeria. It also led to the establishment of a second graduate programme for nurses in Nigeria at the University of Ife.

## Towards a Better Future for Nursing in Nigeria

The Chief Nursing Officer of the Federation of Nigeria had responsibility for the overall co-ordination of nursing matters in the country. When Mrs Pratt assumed office in Broad Street, Lagos, in 1965, there were Principal Nursing Officers in each of the Regions in the country. The Chief Nursing Officer, was therefore, a truly unique title for the country's foremost nurse in a similar way to the Chief Medical Officer/Adviser and the Chief Justice of the Federation. With such a country-wide responsibility for nursing, Mrs Pratt continued to pursue the development of higher education for nurses. The establishment of the University of Ife and a Faculty of Health Sciences within it introduced new challenges for Mrs Pratt. The University was at the time involved in negotiations with the Federal Ministry of Health on a remarkable approach to the training of medical personnel in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The idea was itself revolutionary and was the brain-child of Professor Adesanya Ige Grillo who was the Dean of the Faculty. A distinguished medical academic of international repute, Professor Grillo believed that all health personnel (doctors, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, radiographers and laboratory technologists) ought to be educated and trained alongside one another if a true 'health care team'



spirit was to be developed and fostered. Moreover, a team such approach was important in the context of the delivery of health care to the people of Nigeria-(as with other developing countries) because of the limited resources available. Thus the philosophy had professional and economic implications for the country and the health care professions.

These issues were being explored and discussed at the Ministry of Health when Mrs Pratt arrived as the chief Nursing Officer (CNO). In her characteristic fashion, she listened, pondered on the implications and made up her mind. She was persuaded that if medical personnel in Nigeria received some of their early professional education alongside their nursing colleagues, as was proposed by the University of Ife, then welfare of patients would be better served by the development of a cohesive team approach. For doctors and nurses so trained would appreciate one another's contributions much better and, in a country in which resources were limited and severely constrained by equally important demands, such a venture would make economic sense. It could, therefore, be argued that when however, this idea of a comprehensive medical education for health workers was first proposed, it had not been realised by the medical hierarchy at the Ministry, that nurses were to be included.

In the event, the idea of nurses being educated alongside medical students provoked anxieties amongst the medical team at the Ministry. The issue was a difficult one for the medical establishment in the country. British medical education was (and still is) a completely separate programme from that of other healthcare personnel. Because of their own British experiences, Nigerian doctors were not prepared for this approach to health personnel education. Professor Grillo's idea was to recruit all students straight from school with the same

academic backgrounds but destined to fulfil different professional roles in future careers as doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care personnel. Mrs Pratt came into the discussion with medical and lay officials and quickly realised that, whatever the medical team might feel about the development, it could not stop the University of Ife from developing its proposed programme, purely on academic grounds—that was the prerogative of a University.

Nevertheless, she was perceptive of the implications and realised that practical problems would arise when nurses in the programme graduated. These potential problems were best addressed at the outset and, in particular, the employment prospects of the new graduates would depend upon the view taken by the Ministry. It would be myopic to leave such a problem to a later date when such graduates emerged from the programme.

As the Chief Nurse in the country, Mrs Pratt gave close attention to the development. She liked the proposed course at Ife but pointed out the differences between the University of Ife basic nursing programme and the post-basic course at the University of Ibadan. The products of the former had to compete for jobs on graduation while those from the latter were assured of senior appointments because of their experience and further qualifications. The question of the appropriate salary scale for the Ife products was therefore a central issue to be addressed straightaway.

The issues represented enormous obstacles to the development of a sound idea and official discussions became bogged down in the minutes and counter-minutes. However, Mrs Pratt arranged private meetings with Professor Grillo where the problems were painstakingly examined away from the glare of official pressure. She supported the programme and its unique experiment and urged Professor Grillo to get the University to

submit a formal request to the Ministry. When this was received, Mrs Pratt was asked by the Minister through the Permanent Secretary and Chief Medical Adviser to submit a paper on it. In submitting her paper, Mrs Pratt drew up one salary scale for all nurses, diploma, overseas trained and graduates, with different entry points, but all eventually ending at the same top of the scale. She saw this as an opportunity for her to throw her official and personal weight behind the development. She knew that the Ministry was sympathetic to the proposal but the implication for the labour market was the bone of contention.

The matter was complicated by the fact that there existed a differential in salary between the 'been-to' nurses i.e. those trained abroad (mainly in UK at the time) and those who qualified locally. The Nurses Union (later the Nigerian Nurses Association) vehemently opposed these differentials and argued that all registered nurses should be paid the same salary. The issue was a difficult one but the benefit of hindsight suggests that such a differential could hardly have been sustained since it was not the case with other professional groups. Indeed, Nigerians were already graduating in different disciplines in the country and they were not being openly discriminated against in terms of remuneration. In particular, nurses trained at the UCH were being paid differently from those trained in other Nigerian hospitals. This was quite unacceptable and the Union criticised the Ministry for its blatant discrimination and Mrs Pratt, its Chief Nurse, came under attack from the Nigerian-trained nurses. She was accused, wrongly in retrospect, of preferential treatment for UK and UCH trained nurses. The Ife programme, it was feared, would further alienate Nigerian-trained diploma nurses who would see younger University-educated nurses on higher salary scales than themselves.



Touring the exhibition mounted at the Department of Nursing stall with the statue of Florence Nightingale at the Expo-Nursing in commemoration of the centenary birthday anniversary of Florence Nightingale. L. to R. Mrs Adebo (Lecturer, Dept. of Nursing, University of Ibadan), Her Excellency Mrs Fumilayo Johnson (wife of Lagos State Governor), Chief Mrs K. A. Pratt (CNO and President PATRON) and Dr S. L. Adesuyi (CMA, Federal Ministry of Health, Lagos).

Thus the cycle of ministerial injustice would be complete and Mrs Pratt would be the architect of this professional discrimination. She faced the problem with sensitivity, objectivity and determination. The Ife programme was crucial to the higher education aspiration for nurses in Nigeria and she did not wish to see its development challenged and destroyed. She also hoped that the new programme would act as an incentive for the Ibadan course to move rapidly into higher degree level work and meet the needs of its own products and those from other courses.

The University of Ife invited Mrs Pratt to serve on the Committee set up to look into the future development of the programme. The Committee particularly needed her contribution on three levels—as Chief Nursing Officer, Chairman of the Nursing Council of Nigeria (concerned with the education, registration and professional discipline of nurses) and as one with enormous personal experience of nursing. In each of these roles, she was required to guide the Committee and this created problems in its deliberations. For as Chairman of the Nursing Council of Nigeria, she was quite emphatic on the need for the undergraduates to follow the syllabus laid down by the Council, be examined by its examiners and registered for practice if successful.

The Committee readily accepted this position as well as the various helpful suggestions based on her wide experience of graduate programmes abroad and as one of the architects of the Ibadan programme. However, as the Chief Nursing Officer, she could not commit the Ministry to any undertaking, although she assured the members of her own commitment to the successful launching of the programme. As noted above, the issue of whether the graduates were to be paid the same salary as their diploma counterparts was crucial. The Nigerian Nurses Association continued to argue for parity of pay

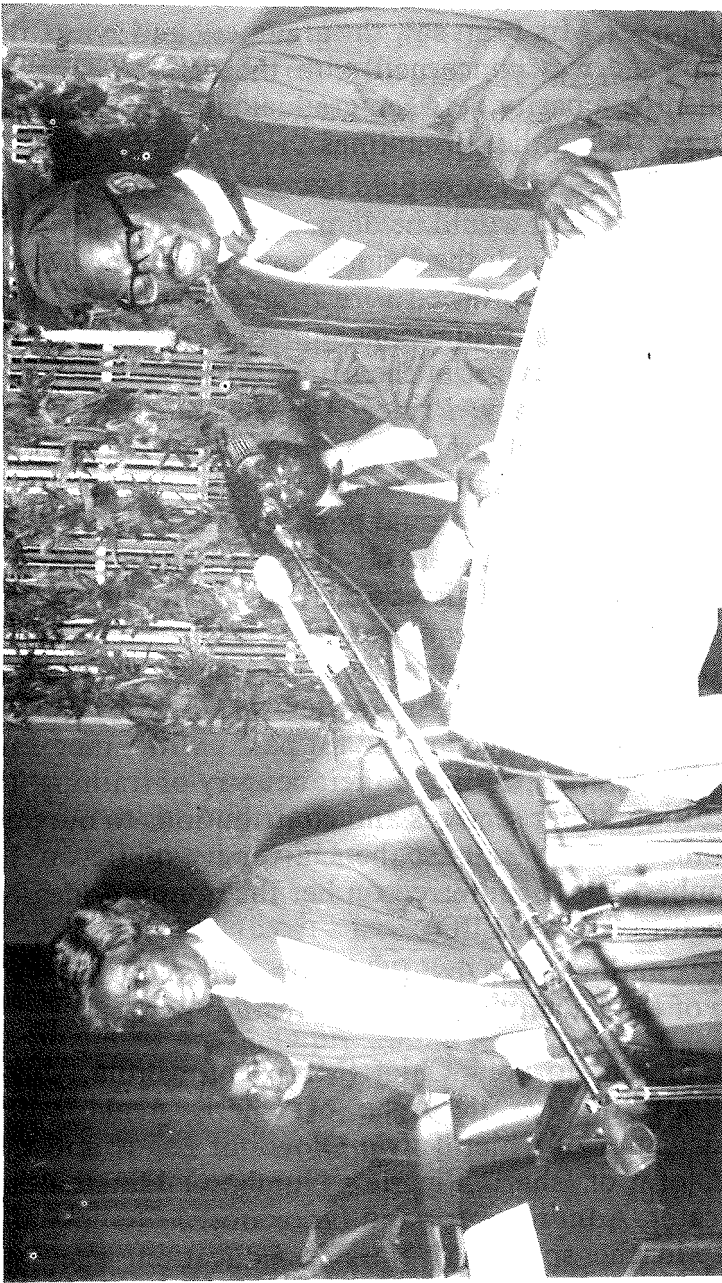
for all nurses. Mrs Pratt saw the argument and sympathised but she was concerned with the greater issue of establishing a parity between graduate nurses and their counterparts in other disciplines.

If graduate nurses were paid lower salaries, she feared that the precedent would be damaging, particularly as it was possible through the Ibadan programme for nurses with diplomas to proceed to a degree in nursing. For the greater good of professional nursing, she lobbied the Chief Medical Adviser at the Ministry, Dr Adesuyi, the Permanent Secretary, Prince Akenzua and the Commissioner for Health, Alhaji Aminu Kano. Eventually, her position was accepted as tenable by all and the scale for Ife nurse graduates would be the same as for all other graduates on the same level—this, of course, did not include the doctors. This was a crucial achievement, for if the multi-disciplinary approach at Ife was to succeed, the graduates should be paid as such. On the other hand, it was ironic in that the same view was held by nurses trained in Nigeria who argued for parity with other diploma nurses, irrespective of their country of training. In recognition of her services and contributions to nursing and other worthy causes, the University of Ife on 19 December, 1981, conferred on her the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD).

The citation, read by Professor Bankole, the then Dean of the Faculty of Medicine read in part,

I present to you, Chief (Mrs) Kofoworola Abeni Pratt, the Iya Ile Agbo of Isheri, great granddaughter of Chief Taiwo Olowo of Lagos and the Olofin of Isheri, Nigeria's Number 1 Nurse, Educator, Administrator and Innovator.

In the sphere of Nursing Education, she was highly instrumental in the approval and recognition of the post-basic BSc degree programme in nursing



Conferral of honorary LL.D. on Chief Mrs K.A. Pratt. The orator, Professor Bankole, reading the citation.

in the University of Ibadan, and later the BNSc degree programme of Ife.

Indeed, the wider contributions of Mrs Pratt was noted by the orator.

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour to request you, by the authority of the Senate and Council of this University to confer on Chief (Mrs) Kofoworola Abeni Pratt, the number one torch-bearer for Nigerian nursing, indeed womanhood, the degree of Doctor of Laws, *Honoris Causa*, of the University of Ife.

And so Ife honoured the one who contributed so much to the development of higher education for nurses in Nigeria. Ironically, the Ibadan programme which was the fore-runner of the Ife one remains equally close to Mrs Pratt's heart. A biographer faced with the documented evidence of commitment and dedication of Mrs Pratt to the Ibadan development (both at the UCH and the University itself) must wonder why the Ife example was not anticipated nor followed. Mrs Pratt has remained without any evidence of official recognition, in the form that other institutions have demonstrated their appreciation, from the one institution that ought to be in the fore-front of the acknowledgements.

The historical records show that Mrs Pratt had been invited to open and speak at numerous training schools in Nigeria but had not performed any such service at the UCH. The University of Ibadan remained silent and reticent even when national awards to Mrs Pratt became a natural acknowledgement of her immense contributions to national life. The author's approaches to the authorities at the UCH were met with a simple catalogue of her appointment and time there—information readily available in her *curriculum vitae*. The Department of

Nursing at the University of Ibadan was not more helpful.

But the nation showed its appreciation. The Federal Government of Nigeria admitted her as an Officer to the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) in 1981.

The contribution to the development of nursing education spans the international arena. In particular, the Royal College of Nursing elected her to an Honorary Fellowship in 1979 in recognition of this aspect of Mrs Pratt's contribution. Once again, the citation, read by Dame Catherine Hall, the then General-Secretary of the College, read in part:

'Kofoworola Pratt, generally known as Rola Pratt, is a nurse who has made a unique contribution to the advancement of nursing in her own country of Nigeria, and has distinguished herself at the international level. She has done much to raise the stature of the nursing profession in her native land and, indeed, throughout the African continent.

Rola Pratt's activities are wide ranging. She is Nursing Adviser to the National Red Cross in Lagos and to the St John's Ambulance Council of Nigeria in which body she also holds office as Vice-Chairman. She is President of the SOS Children's Village of Nigeria and from 1971-1976, she was National President of the National Council of Women Societies in Nigeria.

She visited Russia as a participant in the first WHO travelling seminar in nursing and she led the Nigerian Federal Government delegation to the Mexico City Conference of the International Women's Year in 1975.

Rola Pratt is held in high regard by the profession in her own country who recognise in her not only a pioneer in the advancement of nursing but one who



Honour Award, 1981. Alhaji Shehu Shagari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria decorating Chief (Mrs) K.A. Pratt with the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria insignia.





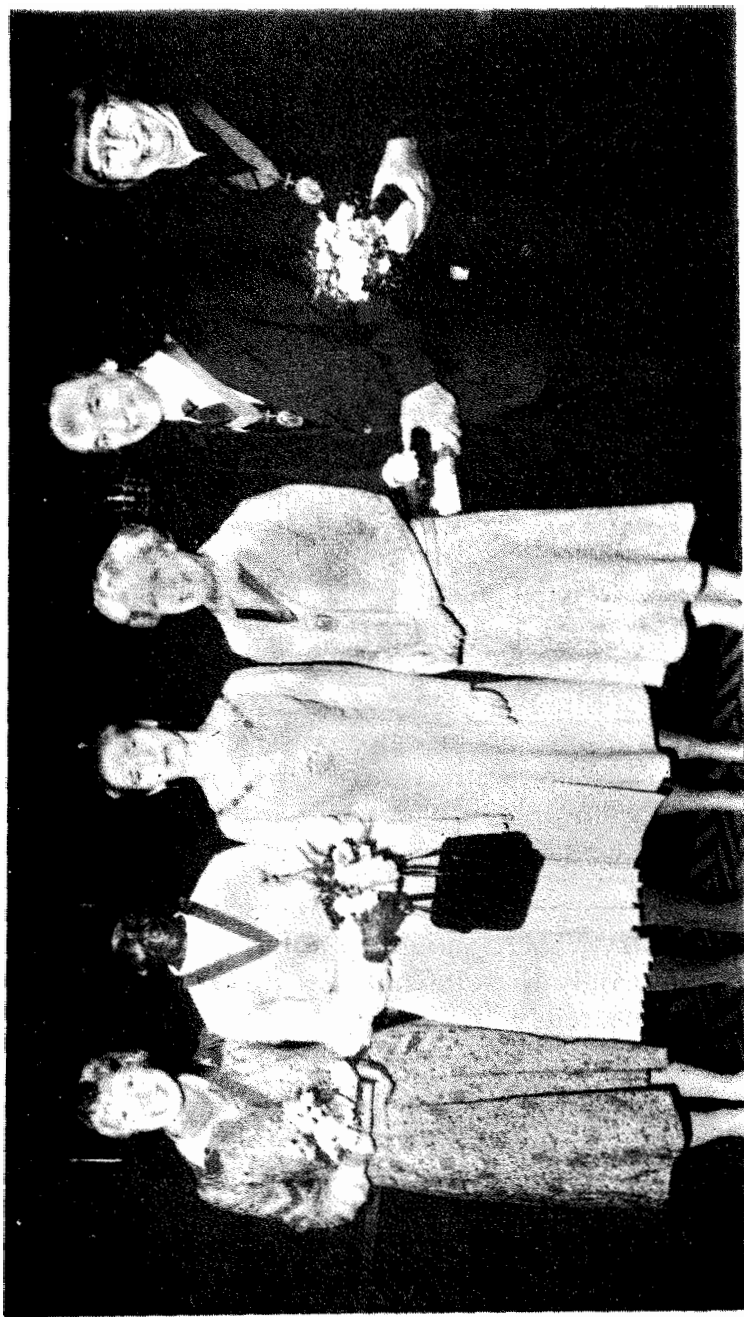
S. O. S. Children's Village, Lagos  
 From left: Lady Ademola (Trustee), Chief (Mrs) Pratt (President), Mrs Nzeakwo (Rep. NCWS) and Mrs IbeNeme (Committee Chairman)

has done much to enhance the status of nursing and the status of women. She has received various honours; in 1972 she was appointed an Officer of the Order of St John, in 1978 she received the Florence Nightingale Medal and in 1975 she received what was undoubtedly the most significant honour—that of the Chieftaincy Title, Iya Agbo of Isheri for services to the nation.

The Council is privileged to be able to add to the honours already received by Chief Mrs Pratt by conferring, on this distinguished nurse, Honorary Fellowship of the College, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing in Nigeria, throughout the African continent and in the international sphere.

These acknowledgements of her contributions raised an important issue regarding the apparent neglect by Ibadan. For the attitude may reflect Ibadan's reluctance to accept what Mrs Pratt saw as a paramount issue when the Ife programme was being canvassed. It was clearly going to be in competition to the Ibadan programme but, in a minute to the Chief Nursing Officer as yet unappointed to succeed her, Mrs Pratt wrote,

I recommend you study the files concerned with this subject. There should be nothing very much to add, but only to point out that this project which was sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Health in co-operation with the WHO and UNICEF, has now been absorbed by the University, like any other faculty of the University. This means, the Federal Government has no longer given separate subvention to the department since 1971. This vote may still appear in the estimates—we are hoping to keep it on and later ask for its diversion to the proposed College of Nursing (Federal Institute of Advanced



The four recipients of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Mrs. K. A. Pratt with, among others, Miss Rees (President) and Sheila Quinn (now Dame Quinn)

Nursing Studies). Administration knows that this is no longer paid to the University of Ibadan.

If Ife University carries out its intention of starting a basic degree in nursing, the Ibadan programme will become *meaningless*. It might be necessary for them to reconsider this present programme and discard this for basic and/or master's degrees in Nursing. Please watch this programme and advise authorities as necessary.

The suggestion that its programme might be discarded for basic and/or master's degrees in nursing was perhaps wounding to the Ibadan authorities. Clearly, it also exposed a misconception about how degree courses in nursing might be run. For there is nothing unusual in the admission of mature students to take first degrees in universities, whatever the discipline. Birkbeck College (University of London) was set up entirely for such courses at undergraduate level and by part-time study. In any event, the development of post-graduate studies is an inherent part of any basic degree course and the differences which Mrs Pratt perceived between the two courses at the time were indeed artificial rather than real. The major difference was that students at Ibadan were previously qualified as nurses and were mature, while those at Ife were accepted directly from School. Such courses are being run concurrently by individual departments in British universities.

Nevertheless, if university education for nurses was a major concern of Mrs Pratt, she also put much effort into other forms of educational advancement for nurses. Thus the Yaba Nurse Tutor Programme featured in Mrs Pratt's developments, too, as well as the raising of entry requirements to the same standard for all the country's nursing schools. In this way, the difference in salary was bridged.



Nigeria had become an independent nation for six years and the health services were being expanded. The country had been run on the basis of four regions but just before the civil war, it was re-organised into twelve new states. This created administrative and other problems and health care was one of the hardest hit services because, paradoxically, the creation of states rather than bringing people together into one nation, initially encouraged individual and group state identities. Health workers (as with other services), moved in large numbers into their newly established states. The result was a gross imbalance in health manpower. Nursing suffered most of all and the Northern states were hardest hit by these changes. There was a concerted effort all round and nursing staff from hospitals in the South were rapidly mobilised for services in the North. Because of Mrs Pratt's special relation with the UCH, Ibadan and the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), an arrangement was concluded with the two hospitals to send four sisters and four staff nurses in rotation for a period of six months each to Kano State, the most hard hit state. The teaching hospitals paid the salaries of their staff whilst Kano provided accommodation and transport. Because it was during the civil war, the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH) Enugu was not involved in these arrangements.

Meanwhile, the shortage of teaching staff became acute and the Ministry sent Mrs Pratt to the UK on a recruitment mission. Nurse tutors were needed urgently in all schools of nursing and, with the help of the British Ministry of Overseas Development and her British colleagues, she managed to recruit just one tutor! This single recruit (Mrs Street) had retired from teaching nursing but kindly agreed to answer the call for help in Nigeria and was posted to Jos in the North. It was during this time in the UK that Mrs Pratt learnt of the expe-

riment at Bolton College of Education (Technical) in the North of England. This was a one-year course designed to meet the shortage of nurse tutors in the UK by recruiting experienced nurses for the shortened course instead of the normal two years. She returned home armed with this information and began discussions with her staff in the Ministry. They reached agreement on the introduction of such a scheme for Nigeria, particularly as the Ministry was already sending Nigerians to Australia under a technical aid agreement with that country to train them as tutors in one year. The proposed local course was therefore drawn up for approval by the Nursing Council of Nigeria.

This response to an emergency demonstrates another aspect of the foresight of Mrs Pratt. For when she arrived at the Ministry, she carried out an extensive administrative re-organisation of the nursing section which then became the Nursing Division in response to the creation of twelve states in 1966. The division was to co-ordinate all aspects of the Ministry's nursing work and liaise with all states' health ministries. A nursing officer's post was established for each part of the Division—services, midwifery, education, public health and psychiatry. There was a post for psychiatric nursing but this remained vacant during Mrs Pratt's tenure of service.

The nursing officer (education and training) was responsible for a broad range of educational activities at basic and in-service levels. Mrs Savage (now CNO at the Federal Ministry of Health), was then responsible for this aspect of the Division's work. A graduate herself and previously seconded as a lecturer in the Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan, she was assigned the task of devising the new programme for nurse tutors in Nigeria. The course was to be based at Yaba Technical College which already had long experience of vocational

teaching courses. Mrs Pratt successfully launched the course in 1970 with support from the College of Medicine, University of Lagos, the General Hospital and Island Maternity Hospital, Lagos. Medical staff from these institutions contributed to the programme and all the nursing officers at the Ministry taught their respective subjects i.e. midwifery, public health, education and services, whilst other contents of the course were taken with other students of the College. It was hoped to review the programme in two years with the hope that the University of Ibadan programme would have produced enough graduates for the various fields of nursing.

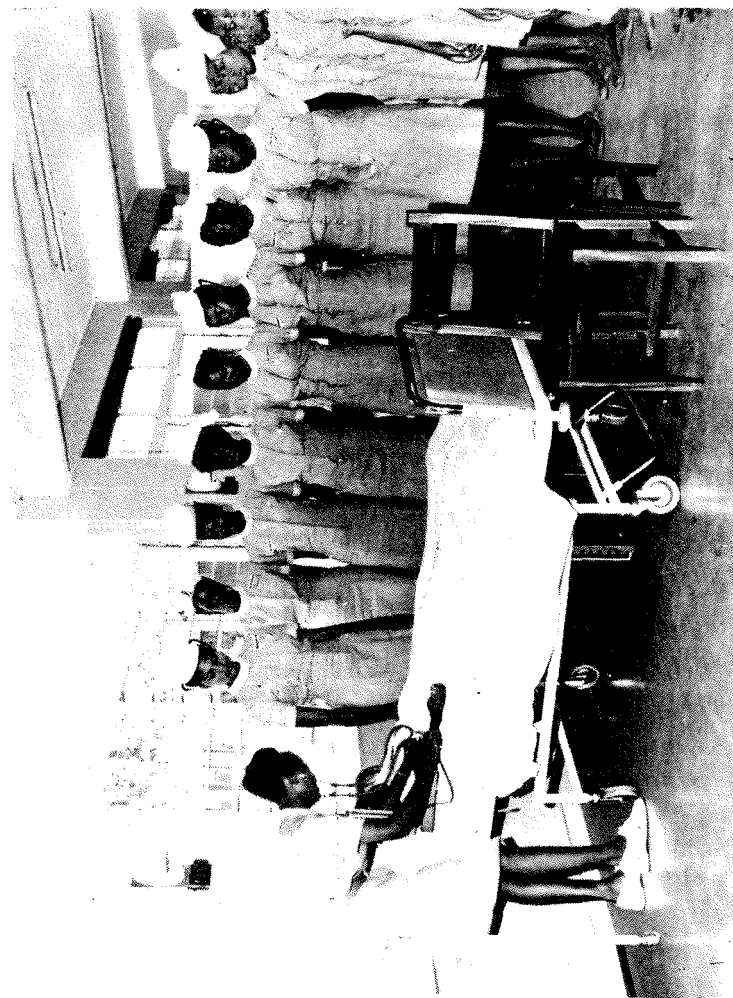
The Department of Nursing contributed to these developments. It organised an annual National Seminar for senior nurses in Lagos. The first seminar was held in April 1971 and papers were read by a diverse group of experts, administrators, academics and nurses. The theme, *Towards Better Nursing Care* summed up the hope for the future. In her introduction to the first Seminar, Mrs Pratt offered the words of Charles Kettering as her guiding principles for change:

The past is gone and static.  
Nothing we can do will change it.  
The future is before us and dynamic.  
Everything we do will affect it.

Her plea for change was succinctly put to the assembled Nigerians:

Our society of the profession of nursing itself cannot abide the retention of outdated ways of thinking and doing. We require a new dimension of thinking, to be able to provide a new dimension of nursing to meet the challenge of producing for our community a high quality nursing care.

The Yaba Programme represented a starting point in



Mrs K.A. Pratt demonstrating an aspect of nursing care to student nurses, School of Nursing, General Hospital, Lagos.

the internal development of nursing education at post-basic level in Nigeria. The establishment of a Nursing Division had served a useful and central purpose in meeting the teaching needs of the profession. But in 1965, soon after she arrived at the Ministry, the Government called for submission of projects for its proposed Five Year Development Plan. This was an opportunity for the first Nigerian to occupy the office of CNO to act decisively. Mrs Pratt proposed the establishment of a Federal Institute of Advanced Nursing and Midwifery and successfully defended and obtained a vote of £0.25 million for the first phase to be followed by further votes for phases two and three of the project. In her minutes to the as yet unappointed successor as CNO in 1972, she revealed a logical and persistent mind at work:

From the cost estimated at £200,000, I would advise to make a start as soon as possible, that the plan be executed in phases i.e. the college building as Phase I, the auditorium as Phase II and the students' residence Phase III. This is because the present vote will not stretch far enough. When drawings are completed (you really have to be a pest to those concerned at the Ministry of Works and Housing to get things moving), it is the intention that the work will be 'firmed out' to private contractors. Again here, you really have to be at it and at them all the time.

This approach to life—being persistent and determined to get things done—has characterised Mrs Pratt's life. She works relentlessly at what she believes in and her vision of advanced nursing and midwifery practice for Nigeria was all-embracing. But this was never achieved in spite of the firm plans she had made for its establishment. The Yaba programme which was intended to be a stop-gap was continued and Mrs Pratt



Members of the Nursing Council of Nigeria with their First Nurse Chairman, Mrs K. A. Pratt

retired into private life. She still believed in the need for an Institute of Advanced Nursing and Midwifery Studies but could not do much about its establishment outside the power base of government. Nevertheless, she towered above everyone in professional nursing in Nigeria and this sustained her interest in the immediate period following her retirement—indeed since then to this day.

Clearly, the catalogue of achievements noted in this chapter owes much to one other individual—Mrs Adetoun Bailey. As the first Nigerian Secretary/Registrar of the Council and the Midwives Board, Mrs Bailey worked closely with Mrs Pratt. A professional of undoubted courage, she worked tirelessly to help shape the future of the Council and, under its first nurse chairman, carried out a major reform of nursing education in 1965. The decade between 1962 and 1972 has been described as one of action, progress, innovation and professional development for nurses in Nigeria. Mrs Adetoun Bailey has been a key figure in that development and, with Mrs Pratt, turned the Council into a force to be reckoned with in Nigeria for the improvement of the care given to clients/patients throughout the length and breadth of our great country, Nigeria.

## Professional Nursing in Nigeria

Expatriate nurses who served in Nigeria were concerned about the development of professional nursing in the country. Although the Nigerian Nurses Association (NNA) was active and acknowledged by the government, it was not able to affiliate to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) because of its trade union activities. For these reasons, Miss Louise Bell, the first Principal of the School of Nursing at the UCH, was anxious to establish a professional association of nurses which could affiliate with the ICN. She canvassed the views of some local nurses trained in Britain but could not convince them of the urgent need for such an association. When Mrs Pratt arrived at the UCH, she was briefed by Miss Bell who asked if she could explore the possibility of organising a professional association. She immediately grasped the importance of such an association and waded enthusiastically into the assignment. A letter was sent to the ICN headquarters in London for information on conditions for affiliation. A small committee was set up which included the three Regional Matrons, as the country was then administered, and the Chief Matron based in Lagos. The committee set to work in earnest and considered the requirements of the ICN for the proposed association.

The NNA was a long-established association and the committee invited its members to join in the deliber-

ations for the proposed organisation. The NNA general secretary at the time, Mr Cole (who was not a nurse), did not respond to the invitation. The committee was in a dilemma and decided to press on with further meetings while efforts were made to bring the NNA into the discussion. These failed completely and the committee finally decided to establish the new association to be called The Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria—(PATNON). Branches of the association were formed in the three regions and in Lagos. The activities were to be co-ordinated by Miss Bell and Mrs Pratt. But Miss Bell declined the co-ordinator role and agreed to be an adviser to the association.

The UCH immediately established its own branch, thus signalling to other hospitals to do the same. Mrs Pratt was prominent in encouraging these developments while Miss Bell and Miss Morrison remained in the background with support and encouragement for the new association. PATNON rapidly gained members throughout the country but these were mainly British-trained nurses and those from the UCH itself. This was not surprising, however, for as we have seen earlier, the NNA with its overwhelming locally-trained membership, was anxious not to compromise its position. They accused PATNON of being an elitist group of 'Been-To/UCH' nurses, determined to suppress locally-trained nurses.

While the seeds of PATNON were germinating rapidly, Mrs Pratt left Nigeria in 1956 to attend her course at the RCN in London. There were two other Nigerians at the RCN at this time, Miss Remi Johnson (who, later married Professor Ogunlana) and Mr Tokuta, both of whom were on the Ward Sisters' course. Mrs Pratt recognised this as an opportunity to continue her co-ordinating activities on behalf of PATNON. Mr Tokuta was a locally-trained (i.e. Nigerian-trained) nurse and worked

at the Adeoyo Hospital which the UCH had used to begin its teaching activities. He was also on the Executive Committee of the NNA in Nigeria. Here then was an opportunity for Mrs Pratt to seek support for PATNON from one of NNA's prominent members.

She made an appointment to see Mr Tokuta after college one evening and the two discussed at length the importance of a professional association for the future advancement of nursing in Nigeria. A contentious issue was the trade union activities of the NNA and these were carefully explained and discussed by the two nurses in a calm atmosphere, far away from the sometimes irrational pressures of competing views in Nigeria. As a result of these exchanges between Mrs Pratt and Mr Tokuta in London, it appeared that he was persuaded of the benefits of a professional association for nurses rather than a purely trade union organisation. The matter was resolved after two further meetings and a final one which included Mrs Remi Ogunlana. The three Nigerians made an appointment to see the Secretary General of the ICN, Miss Daisy Bridges, at the London headquarters. This meeting proved both instructive and challenging to the Nigerians.

Mr Tokuta became personally convinced of the need for Nigerian nurses to join the world body and promised to persuade his colleagues at home to team together with PATNON in order to form one professional body for nurses. It is arguable, with the benefits of hindsight, whether such a promise was either justified or desirable. Mr Tokuta was probably overwhelmed by the 'heady' atmosphere of the RCN and ICN meetings, but the reality for the average locally-trained nurse back in Nigeria was different. For trade union activities as pursued by the NNA were considered more important than the recognition of a world body for professionalism. This was not unreasonable either, given that the Royal

College of Nursing in the UK was itself in existence alongside other nursing organisations which were more concerned with trade union rather than professional nursing activities. What was even more important, the NNA had been in existence since the early 1930s and was registered under the trade union ordinance of Nigeria on 12 January, 1943. On the other hand, PATNON was launched at Ibadan in 1956 and was, therefore, comparatively recent in history.

The discussion with Miss Bridges was fruitful. She informed Mrs Pratt and her colleagues that the ICN Congress was being held in Rome later that year and gave them forms to complete. These were forwarded to the Ibadan office of PATNON and were hurriedly completed and returned to London. The ICN later informed the association that the application would be considered at the Congress in Rome and invited PATNON's representatives to be present. As Mrs Pratt and Mrs Ogunlana were already in London, both were sponsored by the UCH to attend the Congress in 1957.

This first appearance of Nigerian nurses at this world forum of nurses in Rome was a memorable event. The two nurses experienced the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the international meeting. They exchanged views with nurses from different parts of the world and attended seminars at which important and stimulating papers were presented and discussed. They joined in most of the extra-curricular activities including the reception by the Pope at the Vatican. The experience was totally overwhelming and the importance of belonging to such a world body was reinforced at every point. On the day before the end of the Congress, Nigeria was formally admitted as an associate member of the ICN. Mrs Pratt, dressed in an elegant Nigerian attire and with a sense of history that comes with her love for teaching the subject, made an acceptance speech before the assembled world

nurses. The effect of this event was dramatic in Nigeria. There was media coverage and the professional consciousness of nurses was awakened with dramatic fanfare. As would be expected, NNA members received the news with some concern, particularly as government support was a crucial element in the discussions which involved the two associations. For one to be seen to be receiving such world-wide recognition might tip the balance in its favour.

When Mrs Pratt returned triumphantly to Nigeria, she saw the opportunity of the associate membership of the ICN as a means of bringing nurses together. A national conference of PATNON was organised at which a report was presented by Mrs Pratt. Ghana, already an independent country, was also made an associate member at the Rome Congress. This was a significant point for the leader of the Ghanaian delegation was Dr Docia Kissieh who was at the RCN on the Nursing Administration course with Chief (Mrs) Pratt. The association between these West African nurses was to become a close one, for both had trained at St Thomas' although not at the same period and were leaders of nursing in their respective countries. Dr Kissieh visited Nigeria on several occasions and spent a holiday with Mrs Pratt on one of her many visits.

With the associate membership of ICN secured, PATNON pressed on with the foundation work towards full membership. Workshops and seminars were organised at national and local levels to discuss matters of professional nursing in Nigeria. Memoranda and delegations were organised and Ministers of Health throughout the country canvassed on professional matters which affected nurses. The impact of the new Association was felt throughout the length and breadth of the country. The NNA remained somewhat aloof for a time but soon realised the danger to its own existence

if PATNON was allowed to dominate the nursing scene in the country. At last, meetings were held between the two competing Associations in order to join forces as one organisation. These attempts foundered in the bog of philosophical differences. The NNA saw salaries and conditions of service of nurses as its main concern while PATNON, though no less concerned about such matters, saw improved professional education as a crucial issue. For PATNON, professional knowledge was not only to be viewed as a power base, but an inescapable pre-requisite for the improvement of patient care.

The then general secretary of NNA, the late Mr Cole, did much to encourage his members to grasp the new opportunity offered by the proposed union between the NNA and PATNON. He never succeeded because entrenched personal interests and suspicions prevented members of the NNA from adopting a rational approach to the new opportunities. In fact, its members were hopeful of becoming a separate associate or full member of the ICN outside the sphere of PATNON influence. However, it must be said that constitutionally, only one body can be recognised in any one country by the ICN.

It could be argued in retrospect that such a union was undesirable and represented a misplaced idealism. Certainly in many other countries in the world, both professional and union-based organisations co-exist. In recent years, for example, both the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing have themselves been forced to recognise the importance of trade union activities if the interests of their members were to be adequately protected under the law. But in the prevailing pre-Independence climate of Nigeria, idealism was favoured not just by nurses, but by the public at large.

Meanwhile, other events were presenting challenges to nurses. The government had set up a pay review body

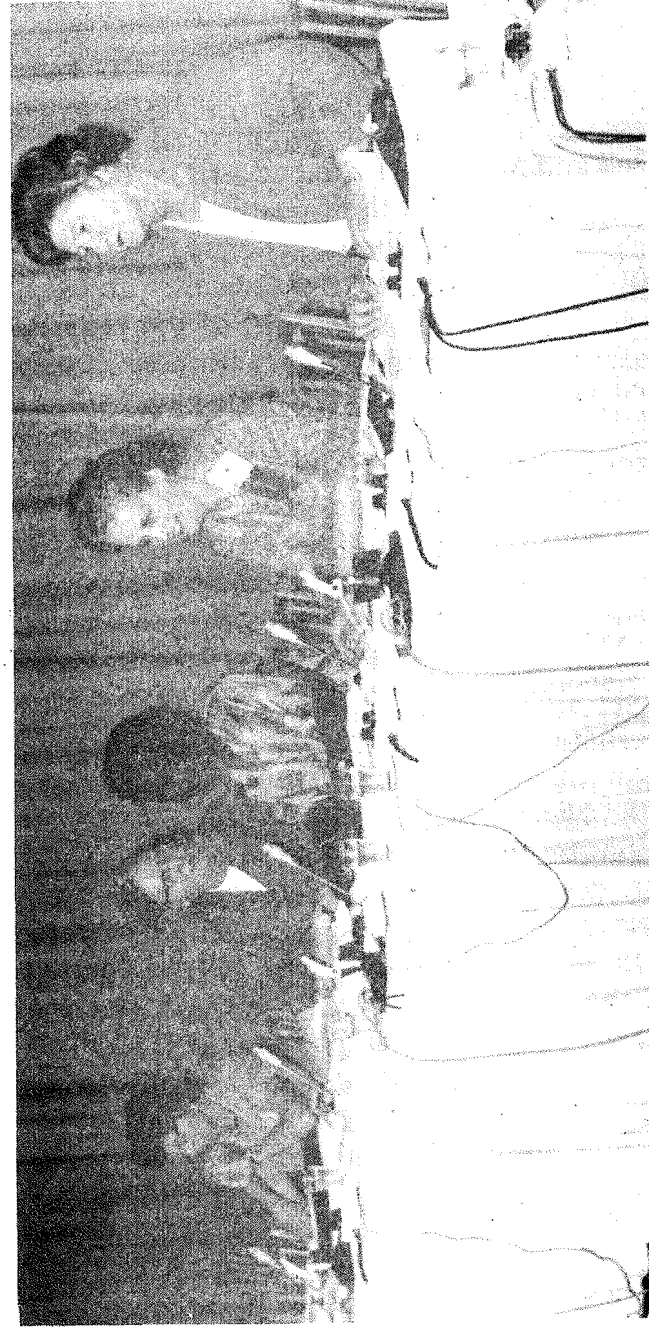
under the chairmanship of Mr Gorsuch. The traditional role of the NNA as the champion of nurses' interest in this sphere was immediately challenged by PATNON which submitted its own memorandum and was formally invited to expatiate on its proposals. This irked the NNA because PATNON was not a member of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and, therefore, had no legal right to negotiate on behalf of nurses. It could be seen now that the NNA's stand was technically correct but it was not possible to overcome the determination of PATNON under the leadership of their dynamic leader, Mrs Pratt. The NNA had done a lot to raise the salaries and improve the conditions of service of nurses in Nigeria and its officers resented any attempts to undermine this role. However, PATNON felt its aims and objectives were consistent with these issues and its voice ought to be heard in any government forum.

In the event, both bodies agreed to exchange memoranda in future and to agree on important points before presenting cases to government-sponsored bodies. In effect, they agreed to co-exist for the benefit of nursing and the practice of the profession. PATNON pressed on with its own organisation which continued to grow from strength to strength throughout the southern part of the country. The first officers were elected in 1957 following the ICN Congress in Rome. Mrs Pratt became the National President, Mr Tokuta (formerly of the NNA) became the General Secretary. He had played a prominent part in the ICN negotiations while a student at the RCN in London. Miss Grogan, an expatriate who was the Chief Matron in Lagos, was elected Treasurer. Branch officers were elected and efforts were made to comply with the criteria for full membership of the ICN. The formalities were successfully completed and Nigeria was admitted to full membership of the ICN. PATNON





ICN Group (Board members and some staff) at Grovesnor House Hotel, Park Lane, London W.1., 1964. L to R Margaret Williams, Rachel Bliss (Director, Faculty of Nursing, University of Chicago, USA), Gwen Buttery and Alice C. Sher (both staff), Rola Pratt and Barbara Fawkes, CN(C), GNC.



June 1965

ICN KONGRESS

Frankfurt/a.M.

ICN Congress held in Frankfurt, W. Germany, 1965. International panel on Socio-Economic Welfare. B. Scott (U.S.A.), M. Kouse (Denmark), Rola Pratt (Nigeria), Sheilla Quinn (ICN), and O. Anstey (Australia).

was to represent Nigeria as a full member at the ICN Congress in Melbourne, Australia in 1961.

As the Association gained in strength, the forthcoming ICN Congress was an important commitment for members. Miss Bell and Miss Morrison had both left Nigeria and two expatriates were in their posts at UCH—Miss Richmond as Matron and Miss Fimister as Principal of the School of Nursing. Both were enthusiastic and supportive and agreed to allow some staff of the UCH to attend the Congress. Mrs Pratt knew that money could not be raised easily at such short notice to send six nurses to Melbourne. The compromise reached was at once ingenious and selfless. Miss Richmond, Mrs Awobokun (now Dr Mojekwu) and Mrs Pratt deposited their savings books with the then Barclays Bank at Ibadan and raised a large enough loan to finance the Australian trip. This move was a success and the nurses departed for Melbourne triumphantly.

This was yet another opportunity for the nurses to establish international links and the grand ceremony of the admission of Nigeria to ICN membership was reported in the Nigerian press. The success encouraged many donations on their return and the savings books, so confidently deposited by Miss Richmond, Mrs Pratt and Dr Mojekwu, were duly released on payment of the bank loans. In all these activities, Mrs Pratt's concern was to raise the nursing standard in Nigeria and she believed that international examples would strengthen this concern. In a speech in 1964, she proudly declared:

We all know by now that this country has been admitted into full membership of the ICN. For those of us who were present at the moving ceremony and heard and saw something of the standards of those countries with which we are to rub

shoulders, it was a deep realisation of the great responsibility we had accepted on your behalf.

It was, therefore, important to maintain a high standard of professional practice; the maintenance of discipline to minimize the risk of error and the determination to provide quality care for patients. Mrs Pratt saw the quest for professionalism as a necessity if nurses were to reject their being grouped with technicians as was recommended in a government report earlier. But true to her critical analysis of problems, she argued,

Perhaps if we are to be honest with ourselves, we should agree with this classification—for about 86% of our nurses are technicians, only versed in the technicalities of nursing. Ask them to lay trollies, do dressings—nothing could be better done. But ask these same nurses to use their minds, to think in terms of principles and to depend less on rule-of-thumb methods, they are completely bewildered. Such persons are a positive danger to the patients.

In order to push forward reforms in these areas of nursing development, she visited Britain as President of PATNON and called at the ICN headquarters in London. There she met an equally dynamic young British nurse who was to remain a life-long friend and a distinguished nurse at national and international levels. Miss Sheila Quinn, CBE (now President of the Royal College of Nursing), was appointed to develop a socio-economic programme for nurses at international level. Following this meeting, Miss Quinn visited Nigeria in 1964 as part of an extensive West African tour of national nursing associations. Her three-weeks' stay in Nigeria was organised by Mrs Pratt as President of PATNON and Matron of the UCH. Miss Quinn remembered the visit vividly and recalled it with delight.

Mrs Pratt was still matron of the UCH Ibadan and I was a guest in her bungalow while using Ibadan as a base. A day spent visiting the hospital and another in the School of Nursing gave ample evidence of her ability as a nursing administrator and the ease of her relationships with other disciplines as well as with her nurses. Equally, her hopes for the future lay not only with a truly professional nursing service for her country but also the desire to see university graduate nurses educated in Nigeria to become leaders of the profession.

As with others who had talked with the author in the preparation of this biography, Miss Quinn saw much of the qualities which enabled Mrs Pratt to lead PATNON during those difficult years, her humane concern for the welfare of others and selfless devotion to duty. She recalled how the short visit to Nigeria left her with an indelible mark of generosity, friendship and personal understanding.

There were the unexpected kindnesses to a guest—often far beyond the obligations of a host. One I particularly remember after a week of tiring travel, meetings and long days and short nights. I was having a one-day respite in Port-Harcourt, and heard a tap on my door and a familiar chuckle which announced Rola. She had flown down from Ibadan, feeling I might be a bit lonely—which I was—and would welcome her company to finish the tour. I also remember the way we quickly got onto the same wavelength and we could catch each other's eye across a room and share a private joke at some unexpected turn of events. By the time I had moved on to Accra we were firm friends and I missed her companionship badly for the rest of my three months in West Africa.

Similarly, moved by Mrs Pratt's high sense of devotion to duty and her warm kindness to guests, particularly foreign guests, two Britons who had the privilege of paying her official visits, remarked in their respective letters to her on their return to England after their inspection of the School of Nursing, UCH, Ibadan in 1962.

The first excerpt is from a personal letter written by Mrs Henry, Registrar, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales:

'I was made to feel so welcome and the gaiety and hard work which I met on all sides was stimulating. I came away feeling that I could make my home in Nigeria and be very happy there.

I am very impressed with the UCH, and it must be very satisfying to see your own student nurses now in positions of responsibility and standing up well under the strain. I know they are being a tremendous help in Lagos too, and that is just as it should be'. (Oct. 1962)

The second remark is also extracted from a personal letter from Ms Muriel Powell, Matron, St George's Hospital, London:

'I want to thank you very warmly indeed for your kind hospitality. I shall never forget your kindness and all the arrangements you made for my comfort. It was so good of you to come to Lagos to take me back to Ibadan in your comfortable car and I only hope you did not suffer any ill-effects as the result of the effort you must have made to drive me. In fact I should have been looking after you for I am quite certain you were not as well as you said you were.' (March 1963).

The PATNON bandwagon rolled on and Mrs Pratt steered it with caution towards a status of international recognition. In 1965, at the ICN Quadrennial Congress in Frankfurt, West Germany, she was elected Third Vice-President of the ICN—four years after Nigeria became a full member. She served, with Alice Glamergon of France (First Vice-President) and Ruth Elster of West Germany (Second Vice-President) under Alice Girard of Canada as President. Because the ICN Board of Directors was heavily weighted towards Europe, Mrs Pratt carried most of the responsibility for nursing in the developing countries. In August 1966, soon after the start of her Vice-Presidency, the ICN moved its Headquarters to Geneva with the Executive Director Helen Nussbaum and Sheila Quinn, her deputy.

It was during this time that the ICN President, Miss Alice Girard and her Deputy Executive Director, Miss Sheila Quinn visited Nigeria. As Chief Nursing Officer, Mrs Pratt had added the Chairmanship of the Nursing Council of Nigeria to her official title—the first nurse to be so appointed by the Federal Ministry of Health.

In 1969 at the ICN Congress in Montreal, Canada, Mrs Pratt's term of office came to an end and she gracefully stepped down. She continued her professional activities and helped PATNON to maintain its pre-eminence in the development of high standards of nursing education and practice in the country. But she also saw a need for sustaining the high standards being developed throughout the country. It was for this purpose that she considered the possibility of the regular publication of a professional nursing journal in Nigeria. She was, therefore, instrumental in the launching of *The Nigerian Nurse* in 1968.

The idea for the journal started while she was matron at the UCH when she encouraged a group of nurses to come together and produce a Nurses' Newsletter at reg-

ular intervals. The first Newsletter appeared in 1963—something of a house journal for nurses at the UCH. It ceased publication after one year. But the idea remained and in June 1968, four years later on, the new journal for nurses in Nigeria was officially launched by Chief Dr M. A. Majekodunmi. Late Professor Oritshejolomi Thomas was adviser and publisher of *The Nigerian Nurse* as a PATNON publication. It was proudly proclaimed as the official journal of the Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria and later became the official organ of the Nigerian Nurses and Midwives (NANNM).

Mrs Adegoroye, the editor for some ten years, wrote in a later article,

The present *Nigerian Nurse* journal as we now know it owes its birth to the dynamism and the great vision of a great nurse in the person of Mrs K. A. Pratt. It is to Mrs Pratt and to those who supported her at that time that we must give credit for setting up this living service in the form of a nursing journal for the nurses of this nation.

Like every new venture, the publishers of the journal had teething problems to the extent that in 1969 the publication ran into deep waters and the publishers wrote,

1969 was almost a disaster year for your journal—inefficient management, a restriction on paper imports by the Government, and a chronic work overload at your printers led to only one issue being published during the entire year.

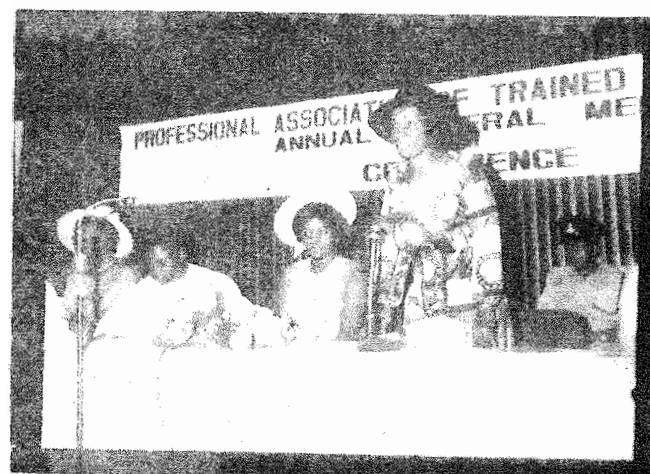
The journal became a quarterly rather than a bi-monthly publication but this did not relieve the financial burden. Relations between the Association and the then publishers deteriorated markedly and by 1971 the journal ceased publication. As Mrs Adegoroye



At the launching of *The Nigerian Nurse*, Mrs Ann Adegoroye, Mrs K. A. Pratt, Chief Dr M. A. Maje-kodunmi (Launcher), Prof. Oritshejoromi Thomas, Mrs Hilda Adefasin and three student nurses.



Mrs K.A. Pratt introducing Her Excellency, Mrs Victoria Gowon, (wife of the Head of State) and Her Excellency, Mrs Funmilayo Johnson. (wife of Lagos State Governor) to members of the Executive Council of PATNON. 1970.



Mrs K.A. Pratt delivering her opening address at the 1970 Annual Conference of PATNON



reported, this was by no means the end because Mrs Pratt came to the financial rescue and saved the publication for nurses in Nigeria and beyond.

By the time the author returned to Nigeria in 1975, the professional development of nursing (so carefully nurtured by Mrs Pratt and her dedicated expatriate and Nigerian colleagues) was at its most effective. A new syllabus for nurse education had been introduced a decade earlier by the Nursing Council of Nigeria. The civil war, with its widespread damage to the country, had been overcome and Mrs Pratt, as Chief Nursing Officer, Chairman of the Nursing Council and President of PAT-NON, had done much to hold the profession intact throughout the country. She travelled widely throughout the war fronts and encouraged nurses to care compassionately for the sick and wounded fellow citizens. It was a challenge for nursing and the citizens of the country. Professional nursing was established throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria and Mrs Pratt, always active and supportive, remained behind the scenes to provide encouragement for Nigerian nurses:

She left the three offices which had made it possible for her to make so many contributions to nursing in Nigeria. What next for Mrs Pratt? The nation certainly could not afford to lose the dynamic and forward-looking qualities of this outstanding Nigerian. As a woman of many parts, she continued to make contributions as a private citizen to charity, church and as an outspoken advocate of woman's rights. With such known commitments to all aspects of health and social welfare, politics seemed an inevitable progression for Mrs Pratt. The opportunity to influence change at the executive and political levels would soon be accomplished.

## A Lady in Politics

Nigeria had experienced a shattering national blow with the collapse of the First Republic in 1966 and the military intervention. By general consent, the politicians were largely discredited six years after Independence. Mrs Pratt had remained an active feminist, philanthropist and activist as a private citizen in the aftermath of the civil war. As we have noted, she had played her part in rehabilitating members of the nursing profession as the Chief Nursing Officer at the Federal Ministry of Health. She was instrumental in the ultimate integration of returning nurses and midwives from what was then East Central State into the wider Nigerian nursing scene. When she left the Ministry of Health in 1971, she remained a much sought after private citizen but by this time, the military government was already talent spotting in order to keep the momentum of the regime operational, progressive and responsive to the needs of all citizens.

In Lagos State, the Military faced a dual problem which was due to the central position of Lagos as the federal capital and a state capital with all the demands involved for the services for all its inhabitants and citizens. As with all the states in Nigeria, the provision of health care to the teeming population was a major problem. Thus in 1973, when Mrs Pratt received a message from His Excellency, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson, she called promptly at his office as requested. The reason



At a party held in honour of Mrs K. A. Pratt (National President, National Council of Women Societies). From left to right: Mrs. Toro John (President, Lagos State Branch ) and Lady Bella Manuwa National Secretary).

for the call was difficult to imagine, given the wide range of activities in which Mrs Pratt was directly involved in Lagos. Speculation seemed pointless, particularly as she had led delegations of the National Council of Women Societies to the government on previous occasions as its national president. Perhaps the Military Governor of Lagos State wished to discuss some of the issues raised by such delegations.

Mrs Pratt called on the appointed date. She was warmly welcomed by the Governor who, in spite of his lofty military and 'political' position was noted for his courteous and sincere respect for his fellow citizens. The two of them talked for some time on various matters—the role of women in society and women's organizations. There was a brief reference to health matters and the general discussion ranged over other topical issues of the time. Mrs Pratt appreciated the opportunity to have this 'chat' with the Governor but wondered aloud whether he wanted to discuss anything specifically. 'No', replied the Governor. He was trying to pick a few brains—that was all! End of conversation and Mrs Pratt was happy in the knowledge that she had performed her civic duty by answering the call of the Governor and making a contribution through their discussion. It was a strange experience or encounter, perhaps, but there was nothing to say to anyone about it.

Three weeks later, Mrs Pratt sat down to breakfast at her Ikoyi residence. She had an early engagement for a meeting at the headquarters of the National Council of Women Societies. There was a caller at the door and he turned out to be Mr F.C.O. Coker, the Secretary to the Lagos State Government. This was a surprise to Mrs Pratt but such visits were not unusual amongst people who knew one another in Lagos. Perhaps the telephone had failed or he was just passing through and called to greet her. In any case, Mrs Pratt did not connect the visit



with anything official for she knew Mr Coker very well and had indeed taught his two sisters at CMS Girls' School, Lagos.

Mr Coker immediately got to the point. All efforts to reach Mrs Pratt by telephone had failed. The telephone was out of order—a perennial problem. Indeed, he had visited Dr Pratt at his surgery who suggested that he called at once at their home as Mrs Pratt was attending a meeting later that morning. The Secretary to the Lagos State Government had a message from His Excellency, Colonel Mobolaji Johnson. The Cabinet was being reshuffled and His Excellency would like to include Mrs Pratt in the new Cabinet as a Commissioner.

This was unexpected news which shook her but she gracefully regained her composure. Mrs Pratt was grateful but asked if she could give the matter further thought in view of its likely implications. The time was around 9.30 a.m. and Mr Coker said that time was short for such deliberations as the Governor would like to go on the air to announce the new Cabinet at 1.00 p.m.

The decision, though difficult, had to be made on the spot—the military tended to do things 'with immediate effect!' Dr Pratt was at his surgery. The telephone was out of order. Besides, Mrs Pratt was already busy setting up a Medical Equipment business and needed to consolidate its establishment as an on-going concern. She asked for a few minutes and while Mr Coker waited, she went upstairs, prayed and tried to compare her present commitment with what she would contribute to the people of Lagos State. It was all rather altruistic but there was no doubt an element of the old desire to accept challenges. She decided there and then to accept the honour and announced this to a delighted Mr Coker who left to inform the Governor.

By now it was time to attend the meeting (organised by PATNON) at the headquarters of the National Coun-

cil of Women, Societies. Mrs Pratt arrived with the secret intact and chaired the meeting. Meanwhile, a government dispatch rider arrived with a letter from the Governor's Office and insisted on taking a reply with him. Mrs Pratt left the meeting to read the contents of the letter which confirmed the invitation from the Governor for her to serve in the new Cabinet as a Commissioner. When the PATNON meeting adjourned for lunch, Mrs Pratt sat alone to consider the latest change in her life. Normally, she would have joined her colleagues but the occasion was one for reflection. While everyone was at lunch, the Governor came on the air and announced the changes to his Cabinet. He named Mrs Kofoworola Abeni Pratt as one of the five Commissioners and the only woman in the reshuffled Cabinet. Among those present at the meeting was Mrs Adetoun Bailey, the Registrar of the Nursing Council of Nigeria. The meeting became a celebratory occasion and, characteristically, Mrs Pratt was already thinking of the responsibility of office and what she would contribute to uphold the trust of Governor Johnson and his colleagues. The position of women in society and that of nursing would be strengthened by this appointment. She had no idea which Ministry would be offered to her but the members joked that Finance **would** be ideal so that they could become contractors! In a banner headline report on Saturday 18 August, 1973, the *Daily Sketch* named the five Commissioners and their portfolios on its front page:

Alhaji Alade Odunewu—Information and Tourism  
Mrs K. A. Pratt—Health  
Mr J. O. Odeyale—Trade and Industry  
Mr Rasheed Gbadamosi—Economic Development and Establishment  
Mr T. A. B. Oki—Commissioner for Justice



Mrs. K.A. Pratt, after the swearing-in ceremony, being congratulated by His Excellency, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson (rtd) Governor of Lagos State.



At the dinner given by the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) nurses and the Lagos State Government nurses, Mrs K.A. Pratt arriving at the party with His Excellency, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson (rtd), Governor of Lagos State.

These were the new Commissioners whose appointments were announced to the PATNON meeting and the country by Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson. Mrs Pratt was sworn-in along with her fellow new Commissioners at a simple but impressive ceremony at the Lagos State House. The new Commissioners were allowed to bring their spouses along and after the formality of swearing-in, they were taken by their permanent secretaries to their new ministries. One of the new commissioners, Mr Rasheed Gbadamosi who, at the age of thirty, was the youngest of the five Commissioners, recalled the occasion to the author.

My first close encounter with Chief Mrs Kofoworola Abeni Pratt was in August, 1973, when I had the privilege of being sworn-in on the same day with her as a Commissioner in the Lagos State Government by the Military Governor, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson . . . Of course Mrs Pratt and the other gentlemen being similarly honoured could claim years of achievement and fulfilment in their various careers and whatever feelings of misplacement I had on that were quickly cast aside when the kindly lady, Mrs Pratt, put me at ease with her usual kind words of encouragement. Later, I was to be flattered on several occasions by her insistence of direct dialogue with me, her colleague, in matters pertaining to her ministry, over and above bureaucratic procedures but always in her desire to achieve, to leave her mark on the provision of health services as the Commissioner for Health, for the people of Lagos State.

She had a way of getting to the heart of the matter and she would brook no nonsense from government officials who often times mask their lethargy behind the easy explanation of inevitable delays, need for

sanctions from higher quarters, file misplacement etc. etc. She personally pulled out all the stops to ensure the Nurses Hostel on Awolowo Road, Lagos was officially opened in her time after years of unending construction as well as the doctors' pre-registration building for medical officers on the Marina. As the lone female voice in the Lagos State Cabinet, she was the unpaid but vociferous advocate of women's interests in matters of governance of the State, sometime before women's rights became the vogue in the socio-political arena around the globe.

This contribution summarises the impact that Mrs Pratt made on the youngest of her colleagues in the Cabinet. The Permanent Secretary at the Lagos State Ministry of Health at the time was Dr Soboyejo who knew Mrs Pratt very well, for he had been the specialist in charge of the Tuberculosis Unit at the Lagos General Hospital when Mrs Pratt was the CNO at the Federal Ministry of Health. She immediately settled down into the administrative responsibilities of the Ministry, no doubt helped by her seven years at the Federal Ministry. The Governor, as a strong and imaginative military administrator, had designed an orientation programme for all his Commissioners on taking office. Brigadier Johnson believed in informal administration based on the maximum co-operation between all the arms of his government. The two-week orientation course enabled state Commissioners to see something of the work being carried out in one another's ministries. It emphasised the fact that the resources of the government were limited and that each Commissioner must appreciate the needs of others for the overall benefits of the State.

Mrs Pratt's experience and her abilities soon became essential tools in the solution of multifarious problems



Lady Bella Manuwa, National Secretary of National Society of Health for Lagos State. Mrs K.A. Pratt, on her appointment as

and challenges that faced her at the Ministry of Health. In these, she was helped enormously by the media. Her appointment was popular and welcomed by press and radio and the Governor was indeed congratulated for his imagination in 'putting the right peg in the right hole' as the *Daily Sketch* noted in an editorial devoted to the new changes in the Cabinet. In her third week in office, she established a reputation for discipline and toughness. The incident, though trivial by normal standards at the time, was quite dramatic. Mrs Pratt was visiting various parts of her Ministry during the familiarisation tour. She was confronted with an orderly who had apparently displayed a disregard for his duty. Whatever the circumstances at the time, Mrs Pratt ordered his immediate dismissal from the health centre for gross negligence of duty. Newspaper headlines showed approval as the *Daily Times* screamed: 'Mrs Pratt won't put up with nonsense!' the following day. The media continued to support her and invitations to open their press functions were frequent. Even after she left office, the deep regard of the press remained.

The appointment was indeed popular throughout the country. There were congratulatory telegrams from all the states in the federation, judges, professional organizations, academics, religious leaders, social welfare groups and colleagues in the medical and nursing services at home and abroad. In all these congratulatory messages, however, there were many individuals whose messages were simple and moving. As the author read through them, the following message from a hospital orderly from Bauchi, then in the North East State, was quite personal:

'Dear Lady

I wrid in New Nageria New Paper 18 August 1973

1st page I am glad to see your appointment by His Excellency Mobalaji Johnson and very happy this not State only all Nigeria we call you mother.'

Clearly, these messages reflected the high regard in which Mrs Pratt was held by the people. In many ways, too, they heralded the beginning of problems and challenges for her. As a civil servant and in all her previous undertakings, she had acted out of personal conviction and dedication in taking decisions. But her new assignment presented a completely new challenge in that decisions depended on political consciousness and qualities that were indefinable. No sooner had she taken up office than the junior doctors in the State began a trade dispute with the government. The young doctors were concerned about their conditions of service, accommodation and a whole series of other grievances. The State Government was under considerable pressure and had to act. It was in this charged atmosphere that Mrs Pratt came into office. She quickly surveyed the problem and recognised its root cause. As she saw it, the government was expanding the health services in the State at a rapid rate and whatever budget it voted never seemed sufficient to meet the ever-increasing demands for financial and human resources. There were projects under way which had to be completed but new ideas were also necessary to carry out innovations. In this, Mrs Pratt had her own vision of what the State required for the health care of its people.

And so the doctors inevitably became the starting point for action. A series of discussions and consultations was held with senior doctors by the new Commissioner. She urged them to co-operate with the government by getting the junior doctors to limit their excessive demands, some of which were local in origin while others were of national concern for the medical

profession. The initial discussions and consultations were frank and constructive and Mrs Pratt made this a regular activity within the Ministry. The outcome of this initial encounter with the medical staff revealed a disturbing issue. It became apparent that because senior medical staff encouraged the junior doctors to join in national disputes with the Federal Government, they were unable to control their excesses at local State level.

In any event, Mrs Pratt tackled the issue directly by meeting the junior doctors who were represented by Dr Ore Falomo and Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti. The grievances were legion and the discussions sometimes acrimonious. They ended in a friendly atmosphere and the Commissioner agreed to the junior doctors approaching her directly, if necessary, in the future. This was because the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry was himself a medical practitioner. Although the problems of the junior doctors seemed to be under control at this point, the grievances were undoubtedly too deep-seated to be solved easily. The junior doctors were to go on strike on two occasions, leaving the nurses to provide care for the patients. This was the most difficult time for Mrs Pratt in the Ministry. She was determined that patients would not suffer and, as a nurse, she often returned late to the Island Maternity Hospital and the Massey Children's Hospital in Lagos to help with medicine rounds and general care of patients. She led the nurses by example and thus defused a potentially dangerous confrontation.

Accommodation was the most acute problem which the junior doctors complained about and the Government was already doing something about it. A pre-registration house officers' residence was being built at Marina close to the General Hospital. But the contractors had defaulted and left the Ministry to cope with irate doctors. Mrs Pratt took over the responsibility for resolving this problem and prepared a briefing for the

Cabinet, setting out her views. The plans for the building were scrutinised and the findings displeased the commissioner. The proposed accommodation was too elaborate for the needs of junior house officers. It allowed for two-room flats with attached servants' quarters. In the situation of general shortage of housing in Lagos, Mrs Pratt saw the possibility of its being abused. Relatives would be accommodated and when settled, repossession would be difficult when a junior doctor completed his pre-registration experience. In the event, she carried out the planned arrangements and the completed grand building was formally opened by the State Governor. The doctors were satisfied.

But nurses had their own grievances, too, not least of which was accommodation for their education and residence. For while their medical colleagues were well provided for in medical schools within the university sector, nurses were being trained at less than congenial accommodation in Campbell Street, Lagos. Mrs Pratt set about putting this right for, as Chief Nursing Officer at the Federal Ministry of Health, she knew that a parcel of land was already allocated at the fashionable Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, for the accommodation of a nurses' training school and residence. The military coup of 1966 and the bureaucracy prevented much being initiated and now Mrs Pratt was herself faced with the chance of doing something for her profession in Lagos State.

She looked closely at all the relevant files on the project and prepared a brief for the Cabinet. Before the Cabinet meeting, she met the Governor and sought his support in the plan to provide educational and residential accommodation for nurses in Lagos State. This became a personal crusade and everything had to be done to get the building completed. She herself lived close to the site and so had a daily opportunity to

observe the progress being made by the contractors. The architect was a Filipino on the staff of the Lagos State Ministry of Works who worked closely with the Commissioner on the project. The progress continued and with hard work all round, the building was completed and formally opened by Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson. It became affectionately known as the Nurses' Hilton by the general public because of its splendid setting.

With the doctors and nurses properly catered for, Mrs Pratt turned her attention to the provision of health services in the State. There were plans for hospitals, maternity units and health centres in various parts of the State. A health centre was completed in Isolo and another one in a remote part of Badagry. The foundations of a general hospital in Ikorodu and another in Mushin were laid. There were improvements to existing hospitals at Epe and Ikeja. Planned developments included the provision of medically fitted boats to serve the riverine areas of the State.

Certainly, the records show that Mrs Pratt used her period in office judiciously. She was fearless but fair and though nursing, as the mainstay of the health services deserved special attention, she never gave preferential treatment to it to the detriment of the other aspects of the Ministry's work. She worked closely with the late Mrs Simi Ogunbiyi, the Chief Nursing Officer for Lagos State, and her other officials to create a better climate for the delivery of quality health care in the State. In order to introduce modern ideas into the health services, she was invited through the British High Commission to visit Britain and see the implementation of the 1974 re-organisation of the health services in action. With Dr Babalola Dada, a medical statistician at the Ministry, Mrs Pratt produced a comprehensive report of the visit with many recommendations for action.

There were, inevitably, difficult aspects to the job of

being a Commissioner. This was partly due to the bureaucratic approach of the Ministry and partly sometimes due to personality differences. A particular incident illustrated the conflict of both procedure and personality and the determination of a Commissioner faced with a difficult civil service protocol. Speech writing for Commissioners was a serious task which the civil servant rightly took seriously. On one occasion, however, the delegation of responsibility to junior officials and the quality of what they drafted were causes for concern for Mrs Pratt. She was not to be a mouthpiece for civil servants and quite openly told the permanent secretary so and in future would write her own speeches. As this was quite against the normal civil service practice, the matter was referred to the Secretary to the Government, Mr Coker by the Permanent Secretary. Mr Coker explained that Commissioners are responsible for all official pronouncements but the civil servants prepare speeches. The Commissioner could, however, provide broad guidelines for the speech writers.

The opportunity to use this approach arose when she was invited to open an International Medical Conference by the Nigerian Medical Association. When the drafted speech was presented to her, Mrs Pratt could not approve it as being suitable for the historic occasion. As the speech was to be delivered at the opening ceremony on a Sunday evening, the Permanent Secretary was requested to arrange for an early meeting at 09.30 a.m. in the Ministry in order to redraft the speech. The Commissioner, Permanent Secretary, Assistant Secretary (who wrote the speech) and the stenographer met early that Sunday morning and completed the speech at 1.00 p.m. This was hardly popular with the staff concerned but it produced the desired results for Mrs Pratt. The Permanent Secretary, in the manner of the 'Yes, Mini-

ster' approach, got the message and had the Commissioner working late on many other occasions!

Other problems were more fundamental. Money was a particularly difficult problem because the Ministry of Health spends but does not generate money. Under Mrs Pratt, the Ministry was voted the second largest amount of money after Education. The health demands of the State continued to increase as the capital attracted more and more Nigerians from all parts of the country. The result was chaotic and patients attending out-patients for treatment could not be followed up as false addresses were sometimes given. It was clear that health care provisions could not be satisfactorily planned in the absence of reliable statistics of the population in the State. Neither Lagos nor the federation as a whole had a reliable census upon which sound health planning could be based.

The government of Brigadier Johnson in Lagos State was a successful and stable one. He retained the same team of Commissioners throughout his administration, apart from the five of whom Mrs Pratt was one. She was proud to have served under the Governor and pays heartfelt tribute to his leadership.

He was patient in listening to his commissioners and had a quick grasp of events. He was willing to let us use our own initiatives and, above all, his humour enlightened our burdens. His stock of Yoruba idioms was used at appropriate times and he was greatly admired by all of us.

The cabinet meetings were invariably family gathering in the trust and confidence which members placed on one another. Discussions were frank and informed by extensive preparation by the commissioners. The Governor's watchwords were 'responsibility, authority and accountability' in the affairs of the State. As the



only female member of the cabinet, the Governor lost no time in setting the protocol for addressing the members at their first meeting.

‘Auntie,’ he said to Mrs Pratt, ‘when I say “he/his” that includes you; there is not “she” in this cabinet!’.

Mrs Pratt, conscious of the unusual setting, jokingly replied:

‘Your Excellency—thank you very much; as the only she, I do not intend to be otherwise but a He.’

She soon settled down and received consideration, support and interest from her cabinet colleagues. She also earned their genuine respect. Mrs. Pratt became a Commissioner on the 18 August, 1973. Nearly two years on, the Nigerian public woke up to the tune of marshal music on the radio followed by the voice of a Colonel Joseph Garba of the Nigerian Army. It was 29 July, 1975. The Colonel had a message for his fellow citizens. That message, similar to that which announced the arrival of the government of which Brigadier Johnson was a member, was the beginning of yet another military coup and a new regime. General Yakubu Gowon, Head of State and Commander of the Supreme Military Council, had been bloodlessly toppled while out of Nigeria at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. And so was Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson of Lagos State along with eleven other state military governors. A new regime and era dawned and Mrs Pratt joined the list of ex-commissioners and ministers in Nigeria.

The departure, like all military coup events, was dramatic and sudden. Mrs Pratt had tasted the power of a political office. She had excelled and acquitted herself as an administrator, a counsellor and an astute nego-

tiator. As in her private life, she remained disciplined and a disciplinarian throughout. Her mission was incomplete but she left the scene gracefully to continue her task outside government. A promising development in health services was halted in its prime but such are the ingredients of human history. It was back to the drawing board for officials at the Ministry as a new administration imposed its will on the people of Lagos State. For Mrs Pratt as one individual contributor, she had the biblical satisfaction of having done her best in the short space of time available to her as a Commissioner.

## Kofoworola Abeni – A Lady of Many Parts

It has become fashionable in the media to refer to Mrs Pratt as the lady with many ‘firsts’ because her record contains so many. But one thing stands out to this author in compiling this biography—it was the boldness and imagination of young Mr Pratt in visiting St Thomas’ Hospital in London that paved the way for much of what followed that initial training. For it could not be argued that simply being born into the upper middle class in any society necessarily confers the ability for the individual to excel. It surely helps and those who have been given the better start in life are expected to make good use of it. Yet much of what Mrs Pratt has achieved would seem to have been accomplished, not so much because she has any particular connection but more because she worked exceedingly hard and was very determined. Had Mrs Pratt trained at a little-known provincial hospital, she would no doubt have excelled, given her qualities, but her path to the outstanding career in nursing and beyond might have been less direct. It would also seem that the event which finally ensured her a place in the history of nursing as Nigeria’s foremost nurse was her appointment to the University College Hospital. When the hospital was formally opened in 1957, the occasion, as we have seen, was a grand national and international affair and this fact alone accounts for the way Mrs Pratt was launched into

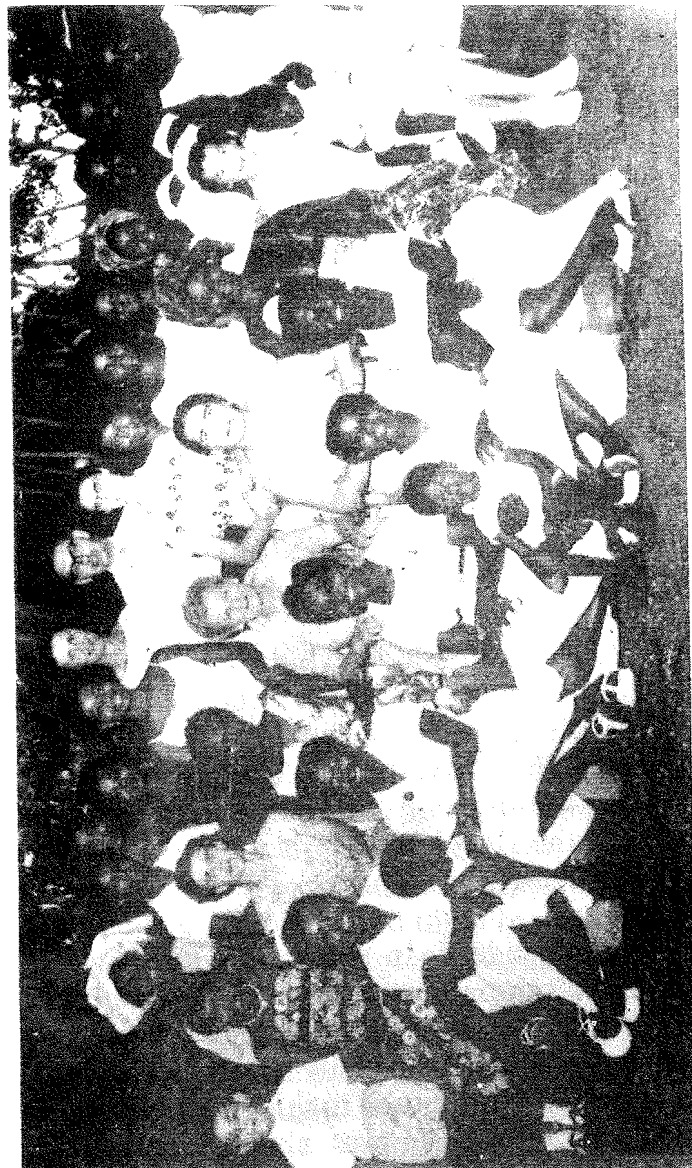
contacts with academics, politicians and people from all walks of life.

Soon after this momentous event, the expatriate Chairman of the Board of Governors of the UCH was succeeded by a Nigerian, Sir Kofo Abayomi. Miss Morrison had resigned her appointment as Matron and was leaving after the ceremony. Her successor, Miss Richmond, had arrived from England and was herself a guest at the opening ceremony. Mrs Pratt’s career was given a tremendous boost, politically, because the late Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Tafawa Balewa and the former Federal Minister of Health, Chief Ayo Rosiji, were amongst the many dignitaries assembled at the UCH for the occasion. In this distinguished gathering, Sir Kofo Abayomi was determined to let the world know that a Nigerian was being groomed to take over the top nursing post in the new Teaching Hospital. Indeed, he arranged for Mrs Pratt to sit conspicuously with the VIPs and she proudly staked her claim. *Nigerianisation* was the vogue and Mrs Pratt was duly promoted to the position of first Nigerian Matron of the UCH.

Mrs Pratt worked closely with Sir Kofo Abayomi and when she left for the Federal Ministry of Health, the Board arranged a farewell party at which Mrs Pratt was presented with a much-valued, inscribed silver tray. The nursing staff of the UCH were no less generous in their farewell to the first Nigerian Matron of their hospital. On the day she was leaving Ibadan, a message arrived at her bungalow from Matron’s Office. It requested Mrs Pratt to call at the Office in the hospital in order to give advice on a matter. The invitation proved to be a memorable one, for Mrs Pratt’s path through the hospital was lined by gaily dressed nurses in their uniforms singing and saying goodbye to their beloved Matron. The senior nurses followed her car in a procession which left Mrs



Opening Ceremony of University College Hospital, Ibadan, 1957. From left: Mrs K.A. Pratt; The Princess Royal, Countess of Harewood; Miss J. Morrison; Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister of Nigeria) and Sir John Rankine (Governor, Western Region of Nigeria) and standing is Sir Kofo Abayomi (Chairman, Board of Governors, UCH, Ibadan).



Farewell party for Miss Louise Bell, MBE. Sitting from left to right are Mrs Aguda, (Night Sister); Miss E. Tattersall (Deputy Principal, School of Nursing); Mrs K.A. Pratt (Deputy Matron); Miss Louise M. Bell (retiring Principal, School of Nursing); Miss Richmond (Matron); Miss Solanke (Sister); Miss Mitchel (Admin. Sister). Also standing and sitting are former students of Miss Bell with some of their children.

Pratt with a tinge of sadness, happiness for mission accomplished and a good deal of pleasant memories.

The departure of Mrs Pratt to Lagos left a vacuum for there was no Nigerian nurse able to take her place immediately. The Board decided to recruit an expatriate from England and Mrs Pratt, on her way home from a trip to Geneva, joined Sir Kofo Abayomi in London to interview Miss Smith of St Charles' Hospital, London. She was appointed Matron for two years. In that time, Miss Remi Johnson was prepared for the position of Matron and she duly took over from Miss Smith who had continued the long list of dedicated British nurses who went out to Nigeria as pioneers in the establishment of professional nursing. They came out to train, educate and encourage Nigerian nurses in the best British tradition with commitment and dedication. They achieved their objectives and left a core of Nigerians who maintained the tradition of professionalism and accountability which characterised nursing in Nigeria for many years. The UCH became a showpiece for the country and all visitors to Lagos were taken there to see what could be done with local money and staff with minimal expatriate help. The University College, Ibadan, was a constituent of the University of London which awarded its degrees and the Hospital was, therefore, named the University College Hospital just like its counterpart in London.

Following Independence in 1960, the University College became an autonomous institution capable of awarding its own degrees. The University wanted the hospital to be renamed University Teaching Hospital. The Board was bitterly opposed to this suggested change and argued that the UCH was already well known world-wide for its standard and excellence in clinical practice. The late Odemo of Ishara, His Highness Oba Akinsanya, led a strong delegation from the Board to the

Federal Minister of Health, Dr (Chief) M. A. Majekodunmi. It was argued that while the University received its funds from the Federal Ministry of Education, the funding for the UCH came from the Federal Ministry of Health and the hospital was, therefore, independent of the University itself. The name UCH was saved and has remained in spite of enormous pressure from the University to effect a change at the time.

As we have seen, it was from this beginning at the UCH that Mrs Pratt proceeded to greater responsibilities at the Federal Ministry of Health and later to the position of Commissioner for Health in Lagos State. But her contributions were much wider than these. As Chairman of the SOS Children's Village in Isolo, Lagos, she helped the many destitute children to live a fairly normal life in an environment which enabled them to develop their potential. A member of the Committee of the SOS Village, Alhaji Alade Odunewu, told the author of the many long hours which Mrs Pratt devoted to the cause of the children who were being cared for in the Village. She was made the first President of the SOS Children's Village Association of Nigeria.

Indeed, what emerged from the extensive research for this biography is that rather than be content with her own achievements, immense though these were, Mrs Pratt had consciously used them in order to benefit her fellow citizens. As a member and later President of the National Council of Women Societies of Nigeria, she was uncompromising in her belief that sex discrimination was unjust and should be challenged. She did this politically and spiritually—the latter through her support for the Young Women Christian Association of Nigeria. This determined commitment to the emancipation of Nigerian women has been acknowledged and in 1973, when Mrs Pratt was appointed a Com-

missioner, the Honourable Mr Justice M. A. Adesanya noted,

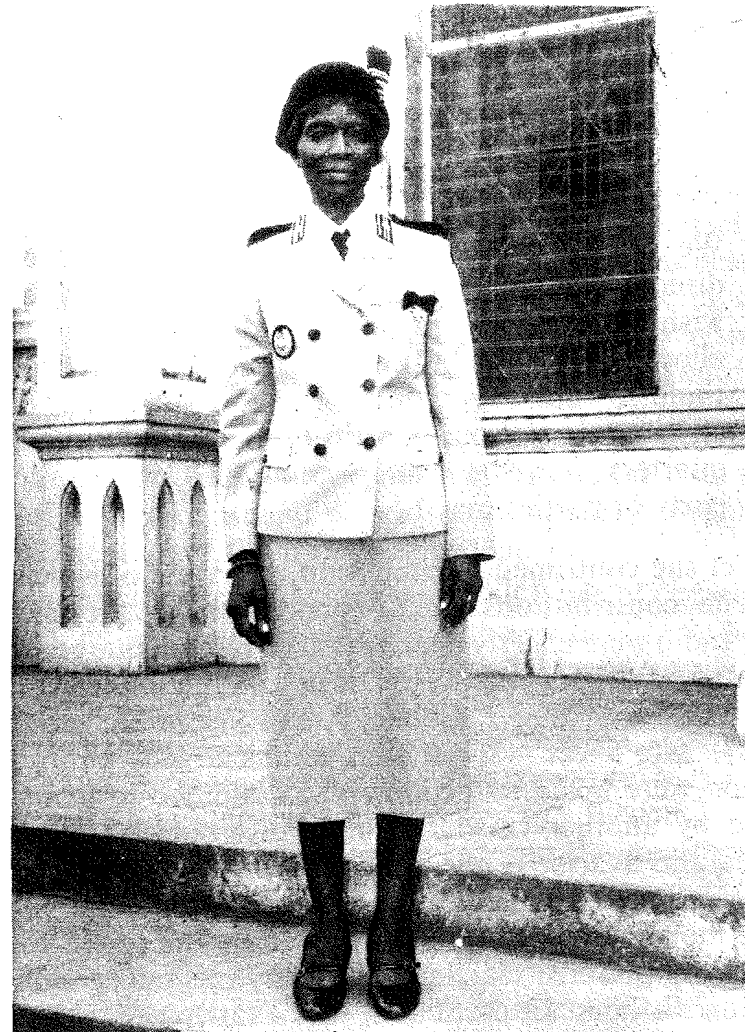
Over the years, very few people in this country bother about doing justice to women. It is the leadership of great women like you which is responsible for the progress which women have so far made.

The National Council of Women Societies, Nigeria, were jubilant that a woman had at last been given responsibility of office in Lagos. The late Lady Bella Manuwa who was the national secretary could not conceal the membership's delight when she wrote,

My President, yet another honour, this one more challenging. Our Council had long been agitating for women's participation in the affairs of State. You are our pioneer and we shall watch and pray for your continued success.

These were testimonies to the unique contributions which Mrs Pratt had made to the public life of Nigeria as a woman, a mother and a professional nurse. But as the first lady member of the St John's Council of Nigeria, she was the first lady to be awarded the most Venerable Order of St John's for her services to mankind.

Of course, political power remains deeply entrenched in the hands of men all over the world. But for Mrs Pratt, the Nigerian situation could be changed if only women realised their own electoral strength in deciding who governs the country democratically. In 1979, after years of keeping out of the limelight, Mrs Pratt briefly launched and led the League of Women Voters which sought to harness the potential political strength of women into an organised campaign for justice for Nigerian women. Alas, the attempt was quickly discouraged by the government-sponsored electoral body responsible



Chief (Mrs) K. A. Pratt in St. John's Co - Nursing Superintendent uniform

for the registration of voters—the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). In a letter dated 9 January, 1979, and addressed to Mrs Pratt as Chairman of the League, Chief M. O. Ani, Chairman of FEDECO, argued that the existence of the League of Women Voters contravened Section 77 of Electoral Decree 73 of 1977 and its disbandment was therefore advised. Mrs Pratt replied and denied any political intentions and concluded her letter to Chief Ani,

We must firmly resent the implications of that directive (advising disbandment of the League) and wish to assure you that as far as the laws of Nigeria allow and its Constitution guarantees, we shall continue to function within them and will not allow any invasion of our constitutional rights from any quarters, however well-meaning and honest such party or parties may be.

Yet she continued to champion the rights of women and her contributions to national newspapers, television and radio were eagerly read by politicians and the generality of Nigerians. In a prophetic open letter to the President of the Second Republic, Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1983, Mrs Pratt warned that unless urgent political action were taken, the country was doomed to be plagued by another period of instability because of the greed and avarice of the political class. She catalogued the numerous misdeeds of individuals within and outside the government who, buttressed by the support of the party political machine, recklessly mismanaged the nation's affairs. In particular, Mrs Pratt pleaded for a direct attack on corruption in the Nigerian society. She warned,

Frittering away foreign exchange in payment to foreign pilots and hostesses may give the individual

a sense of importance, but it displays shameless disregard for the jobless and starving fellow citizens of this country. Many school leavers and graduates cannot be employed because there is no money. When the country cannot employ its newly qualified doctors in a country that is 'under-doctored', then it is time to ask the new jet set to search their souls and consciences.

Mr President, before the new government is ushered in, it is hoped we shall be able to ask ourselves what kind of country we wish to be and how best to go forward. For we will not succeed in being any kind of country worthy of international respect unless we can all contribute our quota towards a stable and peaceful country for all to live in.

A military coup in December 1983 was the outcome of the discontentment which she so openly brought to the attention of the former President.

Indeed, her several speeches on all types of occasions over the years since she returned home to Nigeria have covered issues of current and perennial interest and concern to Nigerians. She is incisive and uncompromising in her search for standards in cultural, political, religious, economic and social aspects of life. Mrs Pratt has been a fighter for human rights, an advocate for the dispossessed and under-privileged and the mouthpiece for the weak, the illiterate and the disenfranchised in society.

As we saw in the last chapter, Mrs Pratt served as a Commissioner in the administration of Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson. He remembers his association with Mrs Pratt because,

Mrs Pratt led several women's delegations to my office in connection with one activity or another.



These meetings allowed me to study her closely and assess her qualities.

One of the qualities is a sense of humour which she uses very effectively indeed. Brigadier Johnson recalls one particular example, albeit in a rather solemn occasion.

The Lagos State Government had embarked on the construction of a modern mortuary which was just completed when her appointment was announced. The official opening and commissioning of this mortuary in Ikeja happened to be the first public official duty Mrs Pratt had to perform. I can vividly remember her turning to me on arrival at the ceremony and leaning over closely to say—‘H.E., of all the jobs in the world, why must my first outing be the commissioning of a mortuary!’ In my usual levity I replied simply, ‘Bad luck, after all we will all have to end up there one day!’

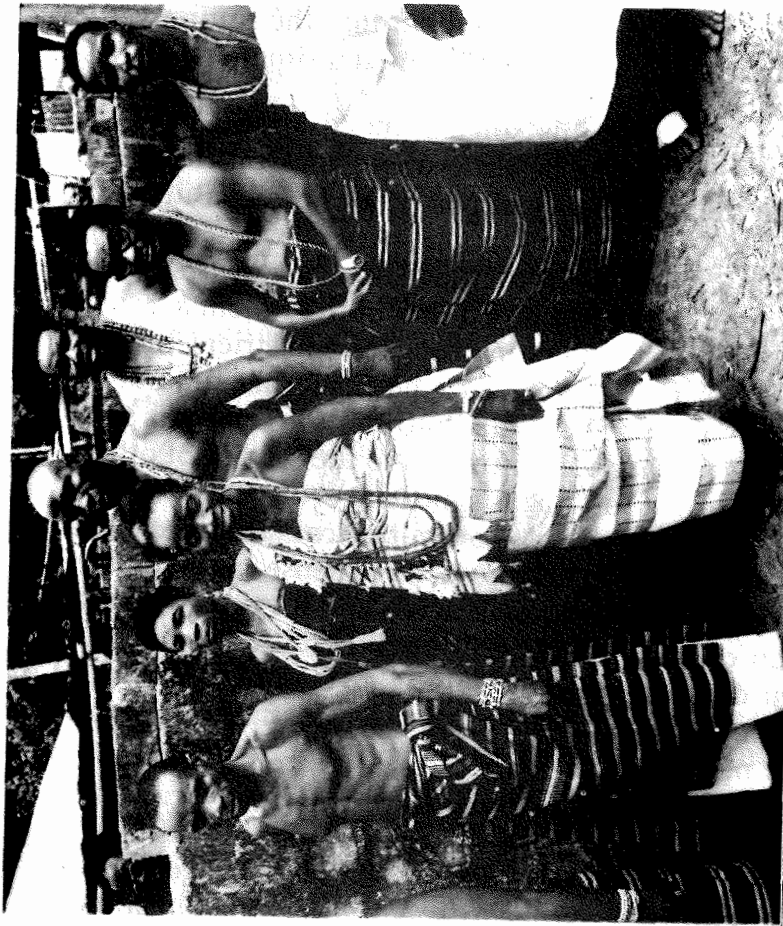
Again and again, one is struck not just by the complexity of Mrs Pratt’s varied interests, but by the loyalty she seems capable of sustaining in all who come into contact with her. Mrs Ifeyinwa Nzeako, who later became National President of the National Council of Women Societies, Nigeria, suggests that Mrs Pratt is looked upon as a woman of service, a lady of all generations, who interacts with people of all ages and who yet retains her respect and dignity. The young identified with her because she cared passionately for their plights in an ever difficult economic order. When the Central Bank of Nigeria applied a squeeze on the payment of foreign exchange to Nigerian students overseas, in 1983, Mrs Pratt took the government to task in her open letter to the President. She regretted the severe hardship being forced upon destitute Nigerian students abroad and argued,

themselves—pathetic and miserable. It is a matter of national concern when the plight of Nigerian students dominates Fleet Street’s output and one supposes the same would be true of our students in other parts of the world. Yet these students are our children and it is upon them that the future of the country depends and to whom it ultimately belongs.

What has made this single-minded approach to life possible? There can be little doubt that much of it is basic to the personality of Mrs Pratt herself. But in my interviews with Dr Olu Pratt, he stressed what is perhaps a crucial ingredient in the development of Mrs Pratt’s philosophy of life. He noted that both of them are ‘very religious’ and having been brought up in strict Christian homes, they have belonged to the Anglican Communion throughout their lives. Mrs Pratt thus brought this spiritual aspect to her commitments to the service of others. As the Bishop of Lagos’s nominee on the Diocesan Board and Standing Committee of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos, her immense contributions were personally acknowledged to the author by the Bishop of Lagos Diocese himself. The Rt Rev. Festus Segun described her as the pillar behind the work of women in the church and a leader of immense stature in the national life of Nigeria.

The same Christian ethics to which she so clearly subscribes, have governed her overall approach to the needs of individuals and institutions. She has given generously to individuals in order to solve personal, educational, social and economic problems. More publicly, Mrs Pratt endowed prizes at Schools of Nursing, Universities and other institutions. The annual Florence Nightingale Debating Competition for student nurses in Nigeria was introduced by Mrs Pratt in order to foster the spirit of





Traditional visit to ancestral shrines on the occasion of conferment of traditional chieftaincy title of Iya Isa Agbo of Isheri, Lagos State on Mrs Pratt, 1975. Following behind are Chief Beylaga, Chief Wilkey and Chief (Breadeater, rtd.) Austin Peters respectively.



Bishop S.I. Kale (then Bishop of Lagos Diocese, now retired), congratulating the two newly honoured chiefs, Dr and Mrs Pratt, at the end of the service held in honour of the occasion at Isheri, Lagos State.

unity amongst Nigerian nurses throughout the land. Donations to worthy causes are made without publicity. Numerous letters of appreciation testify to these philanthropic activities, unremarked by the media who are not solicited to trumpet over such generosity.

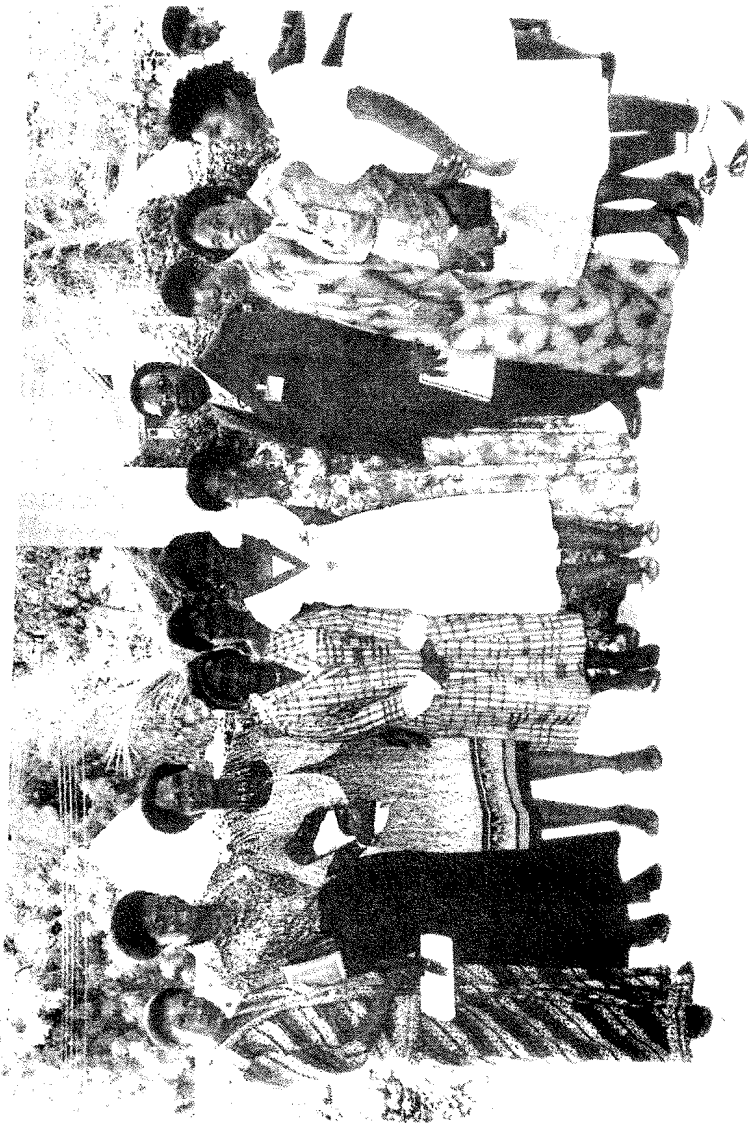
There are, of course, those who would argue that such generosity is possible only because those who offer them have the means. Yet in a society in which personal affluence is conspicuously displayed, often in order to mock those less fortunate, there is something touching about the way Mrs Pratt quietly gives to her fellow citizens and maintains a personal philosophy with emphasis on the sharing of our common resources for the good of all. As we have also seen, Miss Bell was the most influential force behind her professional rise to eminence in Nigeria and the world. Never one to forget the kindness of others, she endowed an annual prize within the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) for the award of Mary Louise Bell Prize for the best nurse in community nursing in the Final Part V of the undergraduate nursing course at the University.

This author was often struck by her undeviating approach to the causes in which she believes. Lady Kofo Ademola, a business associate of Mrs Pratt, notes that her directness and sincerity could not be called into question. She is modest but does not compromise on matters of principle. These qualities have been instrumental in helping her to make contributions to national life over the past four decades.

Dr Pratt has remained in the background to give his wife all the support she needed to succeed in all these endeavours. He is therefore the strength behind his wife. It may be argued that there are hardly many Nigerian men who would give their wives comparable opportunities to make a mark in their chosen profession. But such

a conclusion denies the achievement of a growing number of Nigerian women who have excelled and continue to do so in all walks of life. What cannot be denied is that Mrs Pratt is one of those who choose to combine such personal development with the demands of being a wife and mother. During this author's discussions with Dr Pratt (junior), it was clear that he and his brother held their mother in great affection. For it was they who have benefited from the immense hardwork which enabled them to qualify in medicine and engineering economics respectively. It is also clear that sacrifices have been made by the family as a unit for the greater good of society. Whether or not it is right for any woman to expect such sacrifices to be made by her family remains a matter for individual decision. But there is something sexist about a point of view which acknowledges that men may ask for their families to make sacrifices in the course of their personal advancement and yet deny the same right to women. What is clear is that, over the entire period of her professional and public life, Mrs Pratt has not been parochial and will be remembered at home and abroad for the way in which she tried to overcome the age-long problem of womanhood. She has admirably satisfied the demands of being a wife, a mother and pursuing careers in various walks of life. How successful she has been can be debated, depending on the aspect of her life that is being critically examined. For this author, however, there is no doubt that she has succeeded, in a large measure, in most of the objectives which she set herself at the outset of her life. It is not clear whether such objectives were explicitly stated as guiding principles but they would seem to be implicit in all that she has done over the years.

There have also been elements of failure. On a personal level, she would have dearly loved to have a much wanted daughter for her husband but the development



Inauguration of West African College of Nursing, Banjul, Gambia, April 1981. Mrs. K. A. Pratt with the Liberian delegation.



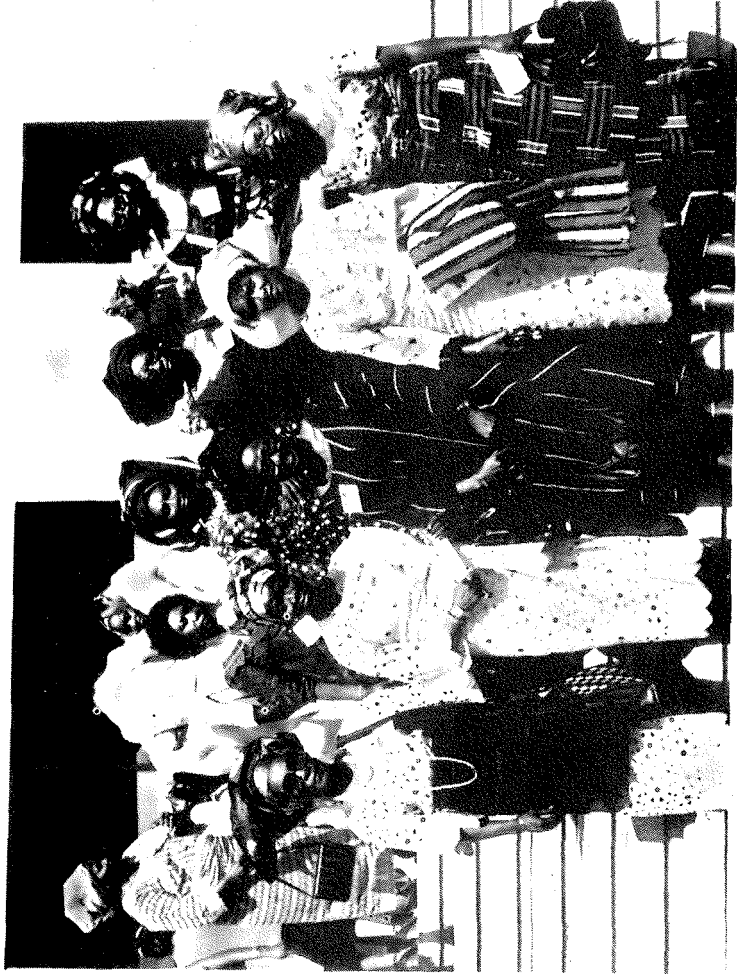
Inauguration of the West African College of Nursing, Banjul, Gambia, April 1981. Mrs. O. A. Adefule receiving the Fellowship of the College. Later elected 1st President of the College.



Former CNOs (and old friends) met again at the International Women Year Congress 1975 at Mexico. Mrs Verna Huffman Splane (Canada) and Mrs K.A. Pratt (Nigeria).



Chief Mrs K.A. Pratt as leader of the Federal Government's delegation to the International Women Year Congress, 1975.



ICW 23rd Triennial Conference in Seoul, Korea. Some of the Nigerian delegation, 1982. Front row, from left: Mrs Clara Olusola, Mrs K.A. Pratt, and from right: Mrs Nzeako (the National President) and Mrs Hilda Adefarasin.



At the reception given by the South Korean Prime Minister to delegates during ICW Triennial Conference in Seoul, South Korea, 1982.





World Health Organisation (WHO) Africa Regional Meeting. Party given by the Commissioner of Health, Lagos State, Chief (Mrs) K. A. Pratt. Present among others: Prof. Adeoye Lambo (Regional Director for Africa, WHO), Dr. Soboyejo (Permanent Secretary) and the host.



Members of the WHO Expert Committee on Nursing at a Conference in Geneva. Present: Esther E. Lipton (Children's Bureau, USA); Mojela Sleguier-Tovey (Yugoslavia); Allan Barner (USA); Lidia Celes (Chile); P. Pomers (Poland); Audrey Wood (England); F. Mortons (WHO); Henry Swanley (Sweden); K.A. Pratt (Nigeria) and K. Ehan (Singapore).



The Link Meeting between Southern Ohio, U. S. A. and Lagos and Iebu dioceses of Nigeria. Bishop Black and Mrs Black with Mrs Pratt as chairman of one of the sessions, in Geneva, 1982.



Visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to to Nigeria, 1982. 982. The Lord Archbishop Robert Runde presenting a bronze plaque of of St St Augustine to to Mrs, K. A. Pratt.





During the dinner given for the Fellows at the end of the Symposium at Leeds Castle 1983. Left to right Princess Margaret (a Patron of RCN), the President of Royal College of Physicians, President of one of the other Medical Colleges, Chief (Mrs) K. A Pratt (FRCN) and Miss Rees (President RCN)



Women's Rally on the occasion of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit, 1982. From left: Mrs Adefosoye, Mrs Ekwueme (wife of Nigeria's Vice President), Archbishop Robert Runcie, Mrs Pratt and Chief Mrs H. I. D. Awolowo.

of her career discouraged an enlarged family. Professionally, her missions were not as fully accomplished as she would wish. The College of Advanced Nursing and Midwifery failed to take off and the abrupt military coup set the clock back for the plans she had for the health services of Lagos. Professional nursing became polarised as a result of the formation of PATNON and the refusal of NNA to join forces with it at the onset. Above all, by excluding male students from training at the UCH from its inception, the nursing profession was denied the opportunity to provide male nurses of high calibre from such an institution who would have spread the same message throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria as their female counterparts. So entrenched was this anti-male feeling at the UCH that even the author, who had taught nurses at one of Britain's prestigious teaching hospitals, King's College Hospital, London, was refused appointment at the School of Nursing. It was not until 1976 that the Nursing Council of Nigeria made the admission of male students mandatory in all schools of nursing in Nigeria.

But the successes are overwhelming. In writing this biography, the author has searched for a meaning to the basic question with which he began the assignment. Why write a biography of Mrs Pratt? Surely there are others in Nigeria worthy of similar consideration and perhaps with a greater stake in such attention but who, by force of circumstances, are unknown to the nation or the world at large. But I am reminded of a moving poem by the late Professor Odeku, Nigerian's outstanding neurosurgeon entitled, 'Tell Them Who You are.'

Tell them who you are  
Or the world will never know,  
In the turmoils of life,  
Liabilities of prejudice,

Before the crowd molest your calm  
And take you for a simple fool,  
Give your soul security; breath;  
Tell them who you are.

This biography is an attempt to tell the nation and the world who Mrs Pratt *is*. It is a contribution to the history of nursing in Nigeria, to the development of Nigerian womanhood and to the global concern of women for a share in the society in which they live. If the reader goes away from this biography with a feeling that one person has at least shown that much can be achieved by a woman who is determined to break through barriers of race, culture and gender; to overcome professional prejudice in a society which regards nursing as a lowly occupation; and to emerge at the end of it all with dignity and widely-acclaimed affection, then the six years of work devoted to its preparation would have been worth every minute. The author commend it to all youths in Nigeria for the inspiration it gives and the wider world as evidence that the Nigerian womanhood, indeed African womanhood, deserves to be given opportunities to develop and contribute to nation-building in whatever settings such efforts are being made. The message for Nigerians at large, through this account of the life of one of our renowned citizens, must be,

Let the world know who *we* are!

# Appendix

## Summary of Chief (Dr) Mrs Kofoworola Abeni Pratt's Life Events

Name:	Kofoworola Abeni Pratt (née Scott) Born in Lagos
Education:	Girls Seminary School (later CMS Girls School, Lagos). Passed Senior Cambridge School Certificate in 1933
Post-Secondary Education:	Teachers' Diploma (1935) SRN (1949) Nightingale School of Nursing, St Thomas' Hospital, London. Received Honours Certificate from the Hospital. Midwifery Certificate (1950)
Post-Graduate Courses:	Tropical Nursing Certificate (1951) Ward Sisters' Course, Royal College of Nursing (1952) (Distinction in Psychology) Staff Nurse, Evelyn Children's Hospital of Guy's Hospital, London (1952) Hospital Nursing Administration Diploma, Royal College of Nursing (1957)
Appointments:	Teacher, CMS Girls School Lagos (Sec-

ondary Department, 1936-40)  
Staff Nurse, Evelyn Children's Hospital, London (1952)  
Charge Nurse (part-time), St Thomas' Hospital, London (1953)  
Medical Ward Sister (UCH) based at Adeoyo Hospital (1954)  
Administrative Sister, UCH, Ibadan (1955-1957)  
Assistant Matron, UCH, Ibadan (1957-1959)  
Deputy Matron, UCH, Ibadan, (1960-1963)  
Matron, UCH, Ibadan (1964-1965)  
Chief Nursing Officer (Federal) (1965-1972)  
Commissioner for Health, Lagos State (1973-1975)

Professional Activities:

Co-founder, Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria (1956)  
Leader, first Nigerian delegation to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress, Rome (1957)  
Leader, second Nigerian delegation to the ICN Congress, Melbourne, Australia (1961)  
President, Professional Association of Trained Nurses of Nigeria (1957-1973)  
Vice President, ICN—first African to be elected (1965-1969)  
Member, Administrative Committee and Board of Directors ICN (1965-1969)  
First Nurse Chairman, Nursing Council of Nigeria (1971-1973)

	<p>Member, Expert Advisory Panel on Nursing, World Health Organisation (1960-1970)</p> <p>Co-Founder <i>The Nigerian Nurse</i> professional nursing magazine (1971)</p>
Extra-Mural Activities:	<p>Nursing Adviser to the Nigerian Red Cross (Ibadan) (1961-1965)</p> <p>Nursing Adviser to the National Red Cross, Lagos (1965-date)</p> <p>Nursing Adviser to St John's Ambulance Council of Nigeria, Vice Chairman and Chief Nursing Superintendent (1965-date)</p> <p>President, National Council of Women Societies Nigeria, (1971-1976)</p> <p>President, SOS Children's Village Association (1973-date)</p> <p>Member, Florence Nightingale International Nurses' Association (1973-date)</p> <p>Member, National Youth Corps Directorate (1975)</p>
Grants and Travels:	<p>Nightingale Fund Grant tenable at the RCN, London (1952)</p> <p>Carnegie Corporation of New York grant (1969-1970)</p> <p>Rockefeller Foundation Grant (1965)</p> <p>WHO Travelling Seminar, Russia (1971)</p> <p>Leader, Conference of the International Women's Year Mexico City (1975)</p>
Publications and Papers	<p>Contributions to the national newspapers on current affairs, particularly on</p>

Presented (Selected):	<p>women and children, also professional articles.</p> <p>1969—'The Challenge of Nursing in Developing Countries', University of California School of Nursing, San Francisco</p> <p>1970—'Equipment for Hospital Wards and Clinics'</p> <p><i>International Nursing Review, German Nurses' Journal, The Nigerian Nurse</i> and <i>Nightingale Fellowship Journal</i></p> <p>1973—Home Nursing Review for red Cross</p> <p>1974—'Priorities in National Health Planning', University of Ibadan</p> <p>1975—'Nigerian Womanhood in the International Women's Year', Mexico City</p>
Religious Activities:	<p>Member of the Standing (Governing) Committee of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos (1968-1986)</p> <p>Member of Lagos Diocesan Board &amp; Synod (1968-1986)</p> <p>Matron, Ladies League of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos (1968-date)</p> <p>Read a paper on 'Christ's Healing Miracles and Evangelism' at the School for Clergy of Lagos Diocese (1981)</p>
Honours:	<p>1972—Officer of St John (St John's Council, UK)</p> <p>1973—Florence Nightingale Medal and Certificate (highest honour for nurses awarded by the Red Cross)</p> <p>1975—Chieftaincy Title for Services to</p>

the Nation (Iya Ile Agbo of Isheri)  
 1979—Associate Member, Nigerian  
 Association of University Women  
 1979—Fellow, Royal College of Nursing  
 of the UK  
 1981—Foundation Fellow, West  
 African College of Nursing  
 1981—Admitted by the Federal  
 Government into the Order of the Fed-  
 eral Republic (OFR)  
 1981—Honorary Degree LLD conferred  
 by the University of Ife (now Obafemi  
 Awolowo University), Ile-Ife, Nigeria.  
 Member of a three-member inter-  
 national committee to award the First  
 Christiane Reimann Prize (1983-1984).

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