

failing in our hospital nurses, both civil and military, is their want of physique. At least, nineteen-twentieths of the professional nurses I have met, are thin, delicate, below the medium height, and almost invariably unmarried, nursing being usually embraced as a profession by those of the female sex who have not succeeded in becoming wives and mothers. Such women are seldom handsome or robust in a country like England, where, owing to the fact that women, whatever their position in life, have little or no private fortune to attract suitors who may marry them for their health, good looks, and agreeable dispositions.

“Women with the physical formation possessed by most trained nurses, cannot bear the strain put upon them. We find, therefore, most professional nurses require almost as much care as their patients, and must have their food, exercise, and rest at stated time, and with every possible attention to their comfort. Notwithstanding this, they are perpetually breaking down, becoming really ill, and seem extraordinarily susceptible to all complaints, such as typhoid, dysentery, etc. This is not the case with Sisters of Charity (Lady Sykes, we gather, is a member of the Roman Catholic Faith), or Nursing Nuns, or in a very much less degree, as they, of course, embrace their calling from totally different motives to the ordinary nurse, begin their training earlier, and are not allowed to profess at all, if not able to pass physical tests as to endurance.”

When Lady Sykes arrived at the convent at Estcourt, she writes:—“We found the convent consisted of several buildings erected on a small hill overlooking the little town, and that, besides the wounded from Willow Grange, who were quartered in what had been a private boarding school of the Nuns before the war, there was a house which had been a private hospital or sanatorium for paying patients. This was now crowded with malaria and enteric fever cases, so, for the first night, my young friend and myself slept on two mattresses in a tiny surgery, redolent of drugs, but the only empty room in the convent. We were very tired, and exceedingly glad to find any place, however humble, to lay our heads. In one sense we felt rather proud to have actually got into a hospital, and to feel we had a chance of making ourselves of use, as we had been frequently assured on our journey that it was an impossibility, and that the doctors and professional nurses would take good care we never got near any wounded, and I must honestly say that my experience, with a few notable exceptions, is, that the army doctors I met seemed, as a rule, intensely and feverishly anxious

to prevent any person of either sex, non-military, entering a hospital under their charge, even as a visitor; and they greatly objected to allow private civilian charity or assistance, even when most urgently required, to provide or distribute nursing, food, or clothes to the men. It was even frequently said in my presence, by many who were suffering, or had suffered, from snubs inflicted on their well-meant and charitable efforts, that army doctors, and particularly army nurses, would really almost imperil the lives of their patients rather than allow their wants to be relieved in an irregular and non-official manner.”

Of the P.M.O. in office during her stay at Estcourt, Lady Sykes writes:—“I do not like to say much about this gentleman, as I am, perhaps, not in this case an unbiassed judge, on account of the great discourtesy and want of ordinary politeness I experienced from him during the whole of my stay in Estcourt. I will only mention one fact, *i.e.*, in all his doings in the hospital, as far as I could see, with the exception of an occasional arbitrary act, or a slight explosion of ill-humour, he carried out a policy of masterly inactivity to a pitch that was positively artistic. . . . As to the supplying of the wounded with any extra delicacies or comforts—many of which, I feel persuaded he could have obtained had he taken the trouble to apply for them at the right quarter—he carefully entered every request made by the nurses or ambulance men in a note-book, where these entries remained, and doubtless still remain; otherwise, as far as we could discover, he took no further steps to see the requests were granted. After a while, everyone ceased applying to him, as they knew it was utterly futile to do so.”

In the following paragraphs we do not consider that Lady Sykes makes out a case for the superiority of male over female nurses in military hospitals. She says:—“My experience, as far as it goes, of hospital work, has led me to believe, perhaps erroneously, that male nurses are, as a rule, infinitely more acceptable to their own sex in illness than female ones. I am, of course, only speaking of the class of persons from whom the privates serving in the army are usually recruited (Editor N.R. strongly protests against *class* distinctions in nursing the sick. “Tommie,” suffering with enteric, needs exactly the same skilled trained nursing care as would the Commander-in-Chief under the same circumstances, and who would suggest that our precious “Bobs,” if stricken down on active service, should be left to the tender mercies of the untrained male orderly? Would not two of our most experienced Nursing Sisters be deputed at once to care for

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