

and so make myself obnoxious, but how I longed to go to work and clean up those poor fellows.

In my interview with Col. Forwood I found him courteous, but quite decided. He thought he might be ready for the nurses in about two weeks, when he expected to have proper accommodations for us; until then the men could get along with the Hospital Corps men to care for them. I felt almost discouraged, but Mr. Townsend thought we had not reached the end of our resources yet, and I left the matter in his hands, with the result that within forty-eight hours we received a call to report for duty at Camp Wikoff. On August 17th I went down with eleven nurses. When we arrived we found about five hundred patients, and with only eleven nurses it was a problem where to begin. Utensils and appliances were scarcer than nurses, nothing to work with, no order, no system; but the warm welcome of doctors, attendants and patients, helped to make things easy. Kind hearts and willing hands were offered in the service, only too glad to work under the direction of those whose training had taught them how to make every movement tell. In a few hours the nurses were distributed to the best advantage, the symptoms in the severest cases noted, directions received from the doctors as to treatment, and then, taking the sickest patients first, the rest of the day was spent in bathing, feeding and comforting generally. The task seemed hopeless, and yet when night came and we met in our tents to compare notes, we felt that some good had been accomplished. Now for the first time we were able to think of our own accommodation. Our supper had been served in the general kitchen about 8 p.m. This was the first meal we had had since a hurried breakfast, with the exception of some sandwiches provided by the Red Cross Society for our journey. This kitchen, which proved to be our dining-room for the next two weeks, was a frame building fifty feet long, with an earth floor, which had one advantage, our darky cook said, in that it could be hoed up, and did not have to be scrubbed. It contained two ranges ten feet long, two rough wooden tables, boxes, barrels of groceries in one corner, empty boxes and barrels to serve as seats when the benches gave out. In this place every one took meals; here was cooked all the food for one thousand people; here was served the ration to convalescents, as they filed past, each with his cup and plate. Later we had another large kitchen, also a model diet kitchen.

Our supper consisted of meat, hard tack, crackers and coffee, with condensed milk, no bread or butter. It was served on the plain board tables from the commonest kind of dishes. Everything was truly rough, but not one word of

complaint was heard, indeed, it was better than we expected. To show you some of the hardships of our life during the first few days, I will quote an extract from Dr. Ira Brown, as given in his official report to the Surgeon-General:—

“At the beginning the food was scanty and very poor when it reached the hospital. Meat, for instance, had to be sent up here in ambulances that were used for transporting the sick, and was then thrown on a crude table covered with dirt and often exposed to the sun, so that it soon became necessary to bury it. When we were able to cook it, it was so full of grit that it took a strong heart to be able to masticate it. Milk came spasmodically, and usually soured late in the afternoon, leaving us to depend upon canned milk for our night supply. For three days there was very little food of any kind except milk, which, fortunately, supplied the patients, and the help could get along under the circumstances. One day we would be out of meat, the next day out of bread, and so on; when we had a supply of one thing, we were all out of the other. Here, too, was the lack of transportation plainly visible.”

Our comfort, as far as our tents were concerned, had been well looked after by the Red Cross Auxiliary No. 3. In fact, everything would have been provided from the same source, only that the Government preferred to care for us in its own way, and knowing how difficult it had been to gain an entrance, we waited until firmly established before asserting our rights in this respect.

Ten nurses arrived on a late train, so that the next day we started in with twenty nurses beside myself. Every train brought a few more nurses; but we could not keep pace with the arrival of the patients. Friday, August 19th, we received a large number of patients from the Mobile. I think few of us realized at the time the horrors of that day. Ambulances at each end of the long rows of tents unloaded their unsightly burdens—it seemed hardly possible they could be human beings, these ghastly living skeletons; some scarcely living, and only saved by prompt treatment. The directions from the medical staff to the nurses were: “Wait for no orders, stimulate freely, use your own judgment as to whiskey, strychnine, and food.” Here showed the generous confidence of our doctors, and to this many a man owes his life. The Army people were not behind in this, every demand was promptly met, supplies were furnished, if they were to be had, without written orders. Officers and men worked hard carrying patients, putting up cots, unpacking stores, doing everything that needed to be done.

Most of the men were simply exhausted and starved, but needed very careful treatment. It was wonderful to watch their improvement;

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