

him?—We *know* they would.) “Then, I think, the ‘Tommys’ feel easier and ‘more comfortable,’ as they express it, when they have a man attending to them, who can do many things for them which they would feel a natural delicacy and timidity at asking a lady to perform. Of course, there are numberless offices in hospital work which are infinitely better carried out by women than men. And the supervision of educated women, whether Nuns or lay people, is useful, and even necessary—at least, I think I am justified in saying this is a received and acknowledged opinion. I remarked this fact particularly at Estcourt among the fever patients, who, when delirious and violent, would resist and try the strength of the strongest male attendants, but who became gentle, quiet, and manageable, even when quite beside themselves, as soon as one of the Sisters, or even a young postulant, came into the room.”

In referring to the organization of the Portland Hospital when at Rosechbank, near Cape Town, we are told:—“Its arrangements are admirable, and I foresaw it would indeed prove a comfort to the men who were to be nursed in it, and a satisfaction to that charitable person who endowed it. The plan of placing two educated and married women in control of the army and hospital nurses, is admirable, and protects the patients from all those forms of annoyance and petty tyranny which are so rampant in the purely military hospitals.

“From the fact that the greater portion of our hospital nurses are drawn from the class of women who have had little companionship except with persons of their own sex, it is easy to understand that such intimate details of male feeling (as unlimited tobacco and conversation in the sick ward) hardly appeal to their imagination or intelligence.”

Lady Sykes, indeed, quotes from a letter received from “an Irishman of the most typical kind,” who wishes himself back at the convent “as he said he was in prison at Maritzburg, not allowed to speak or smoke, and with a fine madam reporting him for every word that he thought, much less uttered.”

Lady Sykes helped to prepare nourishment and distribute it at the Estcourt Station to the wounded men as the hospital trains passed through, and she records how “the pluck and good spirits under privations, suffering, and the bitter disappointment of defeat of all the men I saw was truly admirable.

“Many of the wounded had had no refreshment since early that morning; all were exhausted with the heat, and weary with the shaking and shunting, and they were, indeed, grateful for our small attentions. We gave them soup, jelly, cigarettes, and cocoa, provided by Miss Kennedy and myself.”

“Soup, chocolate and pails of milk (condensed) were prepared for the wounded, and one special train was in charge of one of the most offensive little Jacks-in-office it has ever been my lot to encounter in the shape of a doctor attached to some volunteer regiment (I believe an English one). Mr. Green, the contractor at the refreshment rooms, was a most capable and kind man. I am sure he gave away that day alone out of his own pocket £10 or £12 worth of tobacco and provisions to the wounded, and had assisted us to prepare pails of bovril, condensed milk, and many other things which we were proceeding to distribute to the occupants of the train, together with tobacco, chocolate and jelly. After we had been so employed for about ten minutes, the little doctor walked up to us and said, very fussily, in an extremely insolent manner, ‘Now, you good people doubtless mean well, but I object entirely to this kind of thing. It is quite unnecessary, besides against discipline, that the men should receive anything not actually provided by Government.’ He further added that there was a waggon at the back of the train containing whisky, soda water, ice, champagne, and every possible luxury which he could give to the men, if he considered they really required it. His remarks brought to my mind, very forcibly, the old story of Mr. Squeers, when he described, with deep regret, the unfortunate demise from fever, of one of his pupils. ‘I don’t know why he died. The boy had every comfort; warm tea provided for him when he could not swallow it, and the best dictionary in the house for a pillow.’”

Of military doctors and nurses, Lady Sykes has not a good word to say, but of Roman Catholic Nuns of the Augustinian order she approves. We presume religious bias in no way influences her opinions. She writes:—“That, as soon as hostilities broke out . . . the Nuns—as they belong to an order every professed Sister of whom is a certified nurse, as well as a teacher—gave up their whole convent and themselves to the work of tending the wounded, and turning their whole establishment into a hospital.” It is to be regretted that Lady Sykes has not informed us where and how these excellent “religious” are trained and certificated.

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