

equate supply of female nursing laid down in the manual is a glaring blot on our present Army medical system. It is a violation of nature; for nursing—not superintendence only, but the actual handiwork of the process—is woman's work, not man's. It is an antediluvian prejudice, dating from the time when Mother Gamp ruled in the sick room, and taking no account of the enormous development of scientific and efficient female nursing which has been one of the brightest features in the domestic history of the last 30 years. Since the Crimea, in the days of the Gamp *regime*, we have fought no war where nurses were possible; they can rarely go into savage countries. Even then Florence Nightingale taught us the lesson. She sowed the seed which was treasured and grew up in thousands of hearts, finding thoughtful minds and willing hands innumerable to prepare for the harvest of another great war time.

"Fifty years later the day comes. Two hundred thousand British soldiers are facing wounds and sickness in a distant, but civilized, country, a country in which none can say the sanctity of womanhood is not recognized. Where are the women? Where are the nurses? A wretched hundred or two or three are here; while thousands—trained, skilled, willing, eager—are sitting at home wringing their hands! And all this for antiquated tradition, an unnatural, blind, stupid prejudice of some fusty 'department,' which the War Office ought to have knocked on the head at the outset of the war, with the medical profession and public opinion at its back.

"The arguments against female nursing in the Army in war time may be briefly stated, with the natural answers to them. We will give the Ancients all the rope they can claim; we are too polite to indicate the result. The premiss, more than once laid down in these letters, must be borne in mind—that hospitals strategically safe afford the best, though not in a country like this, the only field for female nursing. What harm came to Mr. Treves's four nurses at Colenso? De Aar, Orange River, Modder River, Naaupoort, Bloemfontein, and many other advanced stations, where only a few nurses have been employed, all suggest the same question.

"1. Soldiers prefer being nursed by orderlies, and do not like women about them when sick or wounded. Answer.—Direct negative; simply not the case. A soldier is not a fool but a man. Any man who has been seriously ill knows the difference between a rough-hewn orderly with horny hands and creaking boots, smelling of tobacco and other things, moving about his bed, tending him with a man's touch, and the real ministering angel, the female nurse. It is not the poor orderly's fault, he does his best; but he is built that way.

"2. There is no place for women to live in in a hospital camp." Answer.—Nonsense; make a place. It has been done over and over again, as in No. 3, with perfect comfort and propriety. "Fine ladies," nominally, have gladly submitted to this stupendous difficulty.

"3. Half the patients in a military hospital are convalescent, sitting about smoking and chatting, and a

woman's presence or proximity interferes with their freedom and natural enjoyment of each other's society. Answer.—If this is true, it is in the nature of a *petitio principii*, because it is another proof that these hospitals ought not to be occupied by convalescents. Moreover woman's presence invariably raises the whole tone of a hospital, its comfort, *moral*, manners, and everything else about it. Tommy has plenty of time for swear talk—that is the suggestion, otherwise the argument has no meaning—when he is in barracks or on the march. Anyone who used the argument to a group of Tommies that they cannot behave themselves in the presence of a nice woman, would be likely to come away with his features somewhat rearranged.

"4. Not all the cases in a military hospital are suited to female nursing. Answer.—This is merely a question of classification and separation which ought to be done under any circumstances. It is just as easy as isolating enteric or scarlet fever cases.

"5. The Old Law, or what may be politely termed the sentimental difficulty—'philandering.' Answer.—This is an argument somewhat difficult, not to answer, but to discuss. To be quite fair, there is something in it unless the nurses are carefully chosen and accompanied by a good matron. The whole nursing world will rise up in arms against the weakness of this answer. But what we have heard, we have heard. It is very little and very rare. There is no more danger than in a male ward in a civil hospital, and that has not yet been found sufficient to expel female nursing from those institutions, and never will be. It really depends on the character and conduct of the woman. Once that is assured she is perfectly safe, and the argument falls to the ground. To say that it cannot be assured would be an unwarrantable insult to a large class of our meritorious, self-respecting, single-minded, virtuous English womanhood.

"There is no need to further urge the arguments on our side, but one should be set down which only knowledge makes obvious. If the department of nursing, almost more important than medical treatment in a campaign, which is always marked by a variety of fevers, is to be enlarged by civil aid in war time we can only turn to female nursing. It is there alone that practical experience lies. Even the St. John Ambulance orderlies, who deserve great credit and praise for their aptitude and devotion in this war, and for whom there is plenty of room at the front, where they would prefer to be, must necessarily start with nothing but theoretic training. They have never seen, much less handled, a patient. They learn quickly, but during the period of active probation—say a month or six weeks—the sick or wounded soldier is the *corpus vile* of the experiment.

"The case is over. It only remains for common sense and humanity to give the verdict."

Once more, during the week we have had the "woman" question widely discussed; eye-witnesses from the Cape eulogise their philanthropic efforts and pronounce them good. So do we. The kind and generous impulse with which our colonial sisters at the Cape have been inspired all through the war, and the value of

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