

to have to refuse it. Take a man with a compound fracture of the arm and leg, and think what it means to have no kind of rest to place under the injured limb. I am sure anyone who has met with a terrible accident will realise what suffering this entails. Through the kindness of some colonial ladies we had a dozen or two feather pillows at Colenso. At first these were a great delight, but soon became saturated with blood, and so rendered useless.

#### THE WANT OF COMFORTS.

The great want of shirts made it impossible to give a real sense of nursing and comfort to the men. Their own shirts in which they were brought down were so soaked with blood that they only attracted the flies, and the shirt, which should have been a comfort to the wounded man, only became a torment. Indeed in many cases the soldier was absolutely without one when he came into hospital, and the few given to No. 4 by the colonial ladies were soon used up, so we had practically to do without them. It was very annoying, knowing the enormous quantity there were lying useless in warehouses at large centres, but the perpetually suggested difficulty of transport silenced our demands. There were also many instances of men shot through the spine, who were completely paralysed, and I remember seeing a man who was sent down on a stretcher trouserless. He was paralysed, and the continual friction of being carried had rubbed a most horrible back sore. This was not the only case of the kind, and as we were attempting to make the men more comfortable the idea of a slip-sheet, suitable for the stretcher, crossed my mind.

#### IN A FIELD HOSPITAL.

The day after the defeat of Colenso I left No. 4 Field Hospital, and went to work in a small field hospital, where I spent the entire day in the operation tent. The work was terrific, and a great deal of valuable time wasted in having to improvise for the bare necessities. The first thing I was asked to do was to make sponges out of cyanide wool, which struck me as extremely extravagant and great waste of time. I remember so well Mr. Treves bringing in a case of neatly prepared sponges which only necessitated the tin being opened to find them absolutely ready for use, without the necessity of even using lotion. The operating table, which consisted of boxes, was unnecessarily primitive, and the cushion was perpetually slipping and causing great inconvenience. Orderlies were busy making up what they called 1.20 carbolic lotion, but really was water with carbolic floating about; and when it came to the question of using splints, we had to improvise a padding out of tow and bandages. In this hospital I saw more method and desire to arrive at a better point of nursing than I saw throughout the rest of the campaign; and it was here I longed to be able to help the over-worked surgeons by handing them ready-made appliances, and I made up my mind to think out a reform in hospital equipment.

#### "WOMEN IMPOSSIBLE AT THE FRONT."

Next, after the great strain of Colenso, came our retreat to Frere, and it was on this occasion I noticed how impossible it was for women to move with a field hospital, and also the anxiety they caused the already over-tired medical officer. The two Army sisters had

no kind of conveyance for themselves and their luggage, and if it had not been for the kindness of Mr. Treves, who offered them seats in his own transport wagon, they would have been in a sorry plight indeed. It is due to this that I have written in defence of the almost universal statement of the medical officer that "women are impossible at the front." This was not the only occasion I noticed the difficulty of transport, for our many moves backwards and forwards from Colenso to Frere and from Frere to Springfield with the vast bulk of the Army sisters' luggage always to my mind seemed to raise the question of suitable transport. Whilst at Frere we only had a few typhoid and dysentery cases sent down. Medical nursing in a field hospital must, under the most advantageous circumstances, appear to the civilian nurse very hopeless, but the nursing was rendered more difficult by the dearth and unsuitability of the appliances.

#### IMPROVEMENTS POSSIBLE.

I felt positive that a very great improvement could have been made in field hospital nursing, and this conviction grew stronger and stronger during my work through the campaign, and the idea occurred to me that if we could have had a Red Cross van to contain all the nursing appliances how many more necessary things could have been taken without adding another wagon to the transport.

I might prolong this paper by giving details after Spion Kop and other battles, but the work in field hospitals differs very little, and the appliances are the same whether at Colenso or Spion Kop. I do not intend these notes to be taken as a diary or any continuous account of our work, but simply to show the defects in Army nursing, and to give the reasons for placing my modest suggestions in Army nursing reforms before the public.

#### A WOMAN DARES.

A woman daring to suggest any kind of reform to the Royal Army Medical Corps will, I know, give offence to many; that I should not have waited to hear the suggestions of nursing reforms from the great civilian surgeons who were sent out by Government will in itself bring criticism. But this would be most unreasonable; these ideas would only occur to the minds of women who are accustomed to organise and plan for the sick, and I shall always remember with gratitude that I was given the unique opportunity of working in a field hospital, for had it not been for this experience I should never have known the necessities and reforms that are absolutely wanted in Army nursing."

This last is a prophetic paragraph, judged by subsequent events. We quite agree with Miss McCaul that it is "most unreasonable" that a trained nurse, who has had the advantage of personal experience at the front, may not express her views in public, without being promptly "jumped upon."

It will be observed that Miss McCaul corroborates what we have urged in this journal since the commencement of the war. Professional control of the Army Nursing Department by efficiently qualified persons. It has to come, why not now?

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