

she remarked sweetly, "it is beautifully cool there. I was on my way to tell you that McMahon had hæmorrhage again, when I met the Chief Steward going to the refrigerator, and it was too good an opportunity to miss." I was struck dumb with admiration for her coolness, and she was much obliged to me for putting an orderly on special duty with her patient, whose life was still in danger. A few days later one of her patients had a rigor; she was sent for hot water bottles, but I knew better than to depend on her then. Half-an-hour later, when the patient had partly recovered, she sauntered in with a placid smile, and announced that she had found a bottle, but could not get a cork. After this I suggested that it was rather stuffy among the patients, and she had better spend her days on deck. She accepted my suggestion, and did not trouble to come below for the remainder of the voyage. I hope the passengers thought her the Lady Superintendent, for she always looked sweet, and cool, and tidy; in fact, a credit to the profession. I last saw her sitting on a deck chair in the docks at Southampton. I believe she trusted to me to see her into the London train, but I was off duty then, and had many other matters in hand. My travelling companions suggested that if her husband could not steer her home, she should be left to spend eternity on the Southampton Docks. She is not doing that, though, for I had a very sweet letter from her shortly afterwards, reminding me of the happy time we spent together on a troopship.

The nurse in pink uniform had got both her training and experience in sick nursing during the siege of Kimberley. She was worn out both in body and nerves. She was sea-sick, and confined to her cabin nearly all the way home. She did not approve of Tommy Atkins, either sick or well, and she reported him whenever she was well enough to be on duty. I always felt between two fires when she was among the patients, because one had to take some notice of her complaints, and the men suffered so much at her unsympathetic and untrained hands that one did not like to add to their misery. One middle-aged man with an injured spine could not stand her on one of his bad days.

"Sure she is just a female dragon," he grumbled; "she took my teacup for lotion," he added, and then suggested that I got some of the men to throw him overboard, for he was a weariness to himself and us. I am happy to say this lady had no inclination to make the nursing profession her life work, and her career as a nurse ended with her arrival in England.

The remaining nurse was the girl whose besetting sin was flirtation. She flirted with every man she came across, the Doctor, the Adjutant, the stewards, even the convalescent patients. No woman would ever have chosen her for duty on a hospital ship. She had been trained as an attendant in a lunatic asylum. But she had plenty of courage, was good-natured, and kind. She could no more keep from flirting than she could from breathing; there was not much scope after all on board, but when she tried to lengthen out her

day by remaining on deck after the other ladies had retired, the officer with whom she was flirting on that occasion, reported her to me next day, and suggested that I kept an eye on her. How many times she was engaged to be married during that and the return voyage, I dare not guess, but in spite of her love for admiration and the other sex, she was often a real help, when help was most needed.

I did not mean to say so much about the amateur nurses, but when one hears so much about the hard-hearted professional, one likes to think that the amateurs are not all perfect either.

Besides the privates and petty officers, we had between thirty and forty sick or wounded officers. Each officer had a trained orderly as servant, and a convalescent army surgeon took charge of them. I sometimes went round and gave a little assistance with dressings. But the officers were an uncomplaining, manly set, and did not grumble or demand attention, and their lot seemed less hard than that of the privates.

There was only one medical man on board on full duty. There were besides two convalescent surgeons—one who took charge of the officers, and a hospital house surgeon just recovering from enteric.

Once, a few days before we arrived at Southampton, he did the rounds for the ship's surgeon, and he pronounced at least half of the sick, and some of the wounded to be suffering from enteric.

One felt that on his brain that dread disease was written, but grateful that he had not diagnosed the disease earlier, for a ship load of even supposed enterics would have been trying.

Besides the sick and wounded, we had "indulgence passengers," mothers, wives, sisters, aunts, cousins, daughters, mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, etc., etc., of officers and volunteer officers.

If ever there is another over-sea war and free passages are given to the relations of soldiers, we hope that these ladies will have a ship chartered for themselves, or if they must have a few wounded and sick on board—for the sentiment of the thing—that they will be their own sick and wounded. This advice is given to the long-suffering War Office for what it is worth.

Three weeks after we left Cape Town we arrived at Southampton, and of the 600 sick men with whom we started, we delivered up 599, one body had been consigned to the waves a few hours before we sighted the Isle of Wight.

Many kind things were said about our voyage, but the one thing that remains when all else is forgotten is a remark made by the Queen of Nurses.

Among the passengers was a lady who had once been Miss Nightingale's probationer. When this lady told Miss Nightingale of our voyage, she asked to have the Superintendent's name spelled for her, remarking "I want to remember her, she did splendidly."

The system adopted by different Borough Councils of distributing disinfectants to the public free of charge is doing much to keep down cases of infectious disease.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)