

HOSPITAL VISITS

As this tremendous war goes on, the public interest becomes more general and gathers more and more closely about the wounded, the sick, and the Government hospitals, the surgeons, and all appertaining to the medical department of the army. Up to the date of this writing (December 9, 1864) there have been, as I estimate, near four hundred thousand cases under treatment, and there are to-day, probably, taking the whole service of the United States, two hundred thousand, or an approximation to that number, on the doctors' list. Half of these are comparatively slight ailments or hurts. Every family has directly or indirectly some representative among this vast army of the wounded and sick.

The following sketch is made to gratify the general interest in this field of the war, and also for a few special persons through whose means alone I have aided the men. It extends over a period of two years, coming down to the present hour, and exhibits the army hospitals at Washington, the camp hospitals in the field, etc. A very few cases are given as specimens of thousands. The account may be relied upon as faithful, though rapidly thrown together. It will put the reader in as direct contact as may be with scenes, sights, and cases of these immense hospitals. As will be seen, it begins back two years since, at a very gloomy period of the contest.

Began my visits (December 21, 1862) among the camp hospitals in the Army

of the Potomac, under General Burnside. Spent a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock, immediately opposite Fredericksburg. It is used as a hospital since the battle, and seems to have received only the worst cases. Outdoors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I notice a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, etc.--about a load for a one-horse cart. Several dead bodies lie near, each covered with its brown woollen blanket. In the dooryard, toward the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel staves or broken board, stuck in the dirt. (Most of these bodies were subsequently taken up and transported North to their friends.)

The house is quite crowded, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody. Some of the wounded are rebel officers, prisoners. One, a Mississippian--a captain--hit badly in the leg, I talked with some time; he asked me for papers, which I gave him. (I saw him three months afterward in Washington, with leg amputated, doing well.)

I went through the rooms, down stairs and up. Some of the men were dying. I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers, etc. Also talked to three or four who seemed most susceptible to it, and needing it.

December 22 to 31.--Am among the regimental brigade and division hospitals

somewhat. Few at home realize that these are merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded lying on the ground, lucky if their blanket is spread on a layer of pine or hemlock twigs, or some leaves. No cots; seldom even a mattress on the ground. It is pretty cold. I go around from one case to another. I do not see that I can do any good, but I cannot leave them. Once in a while some youngster holds on to me convulsively, and I do what I can for him; at any rate stop with him, and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it.

Besides the hospitals, I also go occasionally on long tours through the camps, talking with the men, etc.; sometimes at night among the groups around the fires, in their shebang enclosures of bushes. I soon get acquainted anywhere in camp with officers or men, and am always well used. Sometimes I go down on picket with the regiments I know best.

As to rations, the army here at present seems to be tolerably well supplied, and the men have enough, such as it is. Most of the regiments lodge in the flimsy little shelter tents. A few have built themselves huts of logs and mud, with fireplaces.

I might give a long list of special cases, interesting items of the wounded men here, but have not space.

Left Falmouth, January, 1863, by Aquia creek railroad, and so on Government steamer up the Potomac. Many wounded were with us on cars and boat. The cars were just common platform ones. The railroad journey of ten

or twelve miles was made mostly before sunrise. The soldiers guarding the road came out from their tents or shebangs of bushes with rumped hair and half-awake look. Those on duty were walking their posts, some on banks over us, others down far below the level of the track. I saw large cavalry camps off the road. At Aquia Creek Landing were numbers of wounded going North. While I waited some three hours, I went around among them. Several wanted word sent home to parents, brothers, wives, etc., which I did for them (by mail the next day from Washington). On the boat I had my hands full. One poor fellow died going up.

Am now (January, February, etc., 1863) in and around Washington, daily visiting the hospitals. Am much in Campbell, Patent-office, Eighth-street, H-street, Armory-square, and others. Am now able to do a little good, having money (as almoner of others home), and getting experience. I would like to give lists of cases, for there is no end to the interesting ones; but it is impossible without making a large volume, or rather several volumes. I must, therefore, let one or two days' visits at this time suffice as specimens of scores and hundreds of subsequent ones, through the ensuing spring, summer, and fall, and, indeed, down to the present week.

Sunday, January 25.--Afternoon and till 9 in the evening, visited Campbell hospital. Attended specially to one case in Ward I, very sick with pleurisy and typhoid fever, young man, farmer's son--D. F. Russell, Company E, Sixtieth New York--down-hearted and feeble; a long time before he would take any interest; soothed and cheered him gently; wrote a letter

home to his mother, in Malone, Franklin county, N. Y., at his request; gave him some fruit and one or two other gifts; enveloped and directed his letter, etc. Then went thoroughly through Ward 6; observed every case in the ward (without, I think, missing one); found some cases I thought needed little sums of money; supplied them (sums of perhaps thirty, twenty-five, twenty, or fifteen cents); distributed a pretty bountiful supply of cheerful reading matter, and gave perhaps some twenty to thirty persons, each one some little gift, such as oranges, apples, sweet crackers, figs, etc., etc., etc.

Thursday, January 29.--Devoted the main part of the day, from 11 to 3.30 o'clock, to Armory-square hospital; went pretty thoroughly through Wards F, G, H, and I--some fifty cases in each ward. In Ward H supplied the men throughout with writing paper and a stamped envelope each, also some cheerful reading matter; distributed in small portions, about half of it in this ward, to proper subjects, a large jar of first-rate preserved berries; also other small gifts. In Wards G, H, and I, found several cases I thought good subjects for small sums of money, which I furnished in each case. The poor wounded men often come up "dead broke," and it helps their spirits to have even the small sum I give them. My paper and envelopes all gone, but distributed a good lot of amusing reading matter; also, as I thought judicious, tobacco, oranges, apples, etc. Some very interesting cases in Ward I: Charles Miller, Bed No. 19, Company D, Fifty-third Pennsylvania, is only sixteen years of age, very bright, courageous boy, left leg amputated below the knee; next bed below him, young lad very sick--gave the two each appropriate gifts; in the bed above also

amputation of the left leg--gave him a part of a jar of raspberries; Bed No. 1, this ward, gave a small sum also; also to a soldier on crutches, sitting on his bed near.

Evening, same day.--Went to see D. F. R., Campbell hospital, before alluded to; found him remarkably changed for the better--up and dressed (quite a triumph; he afterwards got well and went back to his regiment). Distributed in the wards a quantity of note-paper and forty or fifty, mostly paid, envelopes, of which the men were much in need; also a four-pound bag of gingersnaps I bought at a baker's in Seventh street.

Here is a case of a soldier I found among the crowded cots in the Patent hospital--(they have removed most of the men of late and broken up that hospital). He likes to have some one to talk to, and we will listen to him. He got badly wounded in the leg and side at Fredericksburg that eventful Saturday, 13th December. He lay the succeeding two days and nights helpless on the field, between the city and those grim batteries, for his company and his regiment had been compelled to leave him to his fate. To make matters worse, he lay with his head slightly down hill, and could not help himself. At the end of some fifty hours he was brought off, with other wounded, under a flag of truce.

We ask him how the Rebels treated him during those two days and nights within reach of them--whether they came to him--whether they abused him? He answers that several of the Rebels, soldiers and others, came to him, at one time and another. A couple of them, who were together, spoke

roughly and sarcastically, but did not act. One middle-aged man, however, who seemed to be moving around the field among the dead and wounded for benevolent purposes, came to him in a way he will never forget. This man treated our soldier kindly, bound up his wounds, cheered him, gave him a couple of biscuits gave him a drink of whiskey and water, asked him if he could eat some beef. This good Secesh, however, did not change our soldier's position, for it might have caused the blood to burst from the wounds where they were clotted and stagnated. Our soldier is from Pennsylvania; has had a pretty severe time; the wounds proved to be bad ones. But he retains a good heart, and is at present on the gain.

It is not uncommon for the men to remain on the field this way, one, two, or even four or five days.

I continue among the hospitals during March, April, etc., without intermission. My custom is to go through a ward, or a collection of wards, endeavoring to give some trifle to each, without missing any. Even a sweet biscuit, a sheet of paper, or a passing word of friendliness, or but a look or nod, if no more. In this way I go through large numbers without delaying, yet do not hurry. I find out the general mood of the ward at the time; sometimes see that there is a heavy weight of listlessness prevailing, and the whole ward wants cheering up. I perhaps read to the men, to break the spell, calling them around me, careful to sit away from the cot of any one who is very bad with sickness or wounds. Also I find out, by going through in this way, the cases that need special attention, and can then devote proper time to them. Of course I am very cautious,

among the patients, in giving them food. I always confer with the doctor, or find out from the nurse or ward-master about a new case. But I soon get sufficiently familiar with what is to be avoided, and learn also to judge almost intuitively what is best.

I do a good deal of writing letters by the bedside, of course--writing all kinds, including love letters. Many sick and wounded soldiers have not written home to parents, brothers, sisters, and even wives, for one reason or another, for a long, long time. Some are poor writers; some cannot get paper and envelopes; many have an aversion to writing, because they dread to worry the folks at home--the facts about them are so sad to tell. I always encourage the men to write, and promptly write for them.

As I write this, in May, 1863, the wounded have begun to arrive from Hooker's command, from bloody Chancellorsville. I was down among the first arrivals. The men in charge of them told me the bad cases were yet to come. If that is so, I pity them, for these are bad enough. You ought to see the scene of the wounded arriving at the landing here, foot of Sixth street, at night. Two boat-loads came about half-past seven last night. A little after eight it rained, a long and violent shower. The poor, pale, helpless soldiers had been debarked, and lay around on the wharf and neighborhood, anywhere. The rain was, probably, grateful to them; at any rate they were exposed to it.

The few torches light up the spectacle. All around on the wharf, on the ground, out on side places, etc., the men are lying on blankets, old

quilts, etc., with the bloody rags bound around their heads, arms, legs, etc. The attendants are few, and at night few outsiders also--only a few hard-worked transportation men and drivers. (The wounded are getting to be common, and people grow callous.) The men, whatever their condition, lie there and patiently wait till their turn comes to be taken up. Near by the ambulances are now arriving in clusters, and one after another is called to back up and take its load. Extreme cases are sent off on stretchers. The men generally make little or no ado, whatever their sufferings--a few groans that cannot be repressed, and occasionally a scream of pain as they lift a man into the ambulance.

To-day, as I write, hundreds more are expected; and to-morrow and the next day more, and so on for many days.

The soldiers are nearly all young men, and far more Americans than is generally supposed--I should say nine tenths are native born. Among the arrivals from Chancellorsville I find a large proportion of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois men. As usual there are all sorts of wounds. Some of the men are fearfully burnt from the explosion of artillery caissons. One ward has a long row of officers, some with ugly hurts. Yesterday was perhaps worse than usual: amputations are going on; the attendants are dressing wounds. As you pass by you must be on your guard where you look. I saw, the other day, a gentleman, a visitor, apparently from curiosity, in one of the wards, stop and turn a moment to look at an awful wound they were probing, etc.; he turned pale, and in a moment more he had fainted away and fallen on the floor.

I buy, during the hot weather, boxes of oranges from time to time, and distribute them among the men; also preserved peaches and other fruits; also lemons and sugar for lemonade. Tobacco is also much in demand. Large numbers of the men come up, as usual, without a cent of money. Through the assistance of friends in Brooklyn and Boston, I am again able to help many of those that fall in my way. It is only a small sum in each case, but it is much to them. As before, I go around daily and talk with the men, to cheer them up.

My note-books are full of memoranda of the cases of this summer, and the wounded from Chancellorsville, but space forbids my transcribing them.

As I sit writing this paragraph (sundown, Thursday, June 25) I see a train of about thirty huge four-horse wagons, used as ambulances, filled with wounded, passing up Fourteenth street, on their way, probably, to Columbian, Carver, and Mount Pleasant hospitals. This is the way the men come in now, seldom in small numbers, but almost always in these long, sad processions. Through the past winter, while our army lay opposite Fredericksburg, the like strings of ambulances were of frequent occurrence along Seventh street, passing slowly up from the steam-boat wharf, from Aquia creek.

This afternoon, July 22, 1863, I spent a long time with a young man I have been with considerable, named Oscar F. Wilber, Company G, One Hundred Fifty-fourth New York, low with chronic diarrhoea and a bad wound also.

He asked me to read him a chapter in the New Testament. I complied and asked him what I should read. He said, "Make your own choice." I opened at the close of one of the first books of the Evangelists, and read the chapters describing the latter hours of Christ and the scenes at the crucifixion. The poor wasted young man asked me to read the following chapter also, how Christ rose again. I read very slowly, for Oscar was feeble. It pleased him very much, yet the tears were in his eyes. He asked me if I enjoyed religion. I said, "Perhaps not, my dear, in the way you mean, and yet may-be it is the same thing." He said, "It is my chief reliance." He talked of death, and said he did not fear it. I said, "Why, Oscar, don't you think you will get well?" He said, "I may, but it is not probable." He spoke calmly of his condition. The wound was very bad; it discharged much. Then the diarrhoea had prostrated him, and I felt that he was even then the same as dying. He behaved very manly and affectionate. The kiss I gave him as I was about leaving, he returned fourfold. He gave me his mother's address, Mrs. Sally D. Wilber, Alleghany post-office, Cattaraugus county, N. Y. I had several such interviews with him. He died a few days after the one just described.

August, September, October, etc.--I continue among the hospitals in the same manner, getting still more experience, and daily and nightly meeting with most interesting cases. Through the winter of 1863-4, the same. The work of the army hospital visitor is indeed a trade, an art, requiring both experience and natural gifts, and the greatest judgment. A large number of the visitors to the hospitals do no good at all, while many do harm. The surgeons have great trouble from them. Some visitors go from

curiosity--as to a show of animals. Others give the men improper things. Then there are always some poor fellows, in the crises of sickness or wounds, that imperatively need perfect quiet--not to be talked to by strangers. Few realize that it is not the mere giving of gifts that does good; it is the proper adaption. Nothing is of any avail among the soldiers except conscientious personal investigation of cases, each for itself; with sharp, critical faculties, but in the fullest spirit of human sympathy and boundless love. The men feel such love more than anything else. I have met very few persons who realize the importance of humoring the yearnings for love and friendship of these American young men, prostrated by sickness and wounds.

February, 1864.--I am down at Culpepper and Brandy station, among the camp of First, Second, and Third Corps, and going through the division hospitals. The condition of the camps here this winter is immensely improved from last winter near Falmouth. All the army is now in huts of logs and mud, with fireplaces; and the food is plentiful and tolerably good. In the camp hospitals I find diarrhoea more and more prevalent, and in chronic form. It is at present the great disease of the army. I think the doctors generally give too much medicine, oftener making things worse. Then they hold on to the cases in camp too long. When the disease is almost fixed beyond remedy, they send it up to Washington. Alas! how many such wrecks have I seen landed from boat and railroad and deposited in the Washington hospitals, mostly but to linger awhile and die, after being kept at the front too long.

The hospitals in front, this winter, are also much improved. The men have cots, and often wooden floors, and the tents are well warmed.

March and April, 1864.--Back again in Washington. They are breaking up the camp hospitals in Meade's army, preparing for a move. As I write this, in March, there are all the signs. Yesterday and last night the sick were arriving here in long trains, all day and night. I was among the new-comers most of the night. One train of a thousand came into the depot, and others followed. The ambulances were going all night, distributing them to the various hospitals here. When they come in, some literally in a dying condition, you may well imagine it is a lamentable sight. I hardly know which is worse, to see the wounded after a battle, or these wasted wrecks.

I remain in capital health and strength, and go every day, as before, among the men, in my own way, enjoying my life and occupation more than I can tell.

Of the army hospitals now in and around Washington, there are thirty or forty. I am in the habit of going to all, and to Fairfax seminary, Alexandria, and over Long Bridge to the convalescent camp, etc. As a specimen of almost any one of these hospitals, fancy to yourself a space of three to twenty acres of ground, on which are grouped ten or twelve very large wooden barracks, with, perhaps, a dozen or twenty, and sometimes more than that number, of small buildings, capable all together of accommodating from five hundred to a thousand or fifteen hundred

persons. Sometimes these large wooden barracks, or wards, each of them, perhaps, from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet long, are arranged in a straight row, evenly fronting the street; others are planned so as to form an immense V; and others again arranged around a hollow square. They make all together a huge cluster, with the additional tents, extra wards for contagious diseases, guard-houses, sutler's stores, chaplain's house, etc. In the middle will probably be an edifice devoted to the offices of the surgeon in charge and the ward surgeons, principal attachés, clerks, etc. Then around this centre radiate or are gathered the wards for the wounded and sick.

These wards are either lettered alphabetically, Ward G, Ward K, or else numerically, 1, 2, 3, etc. Each has its ward surgeon and corps of nurses. Of course there is, in the aggregate, quite a muster of employees, and over all the surgeon in charge. Any one of these hospitals is a little city in itself. Take, for instance, the Carver hospital, out a couple of miles, on a hill, northern part of Fourteenth street. It has more inmates than an ordinary country town. The same with the Lincoln hospital, east of the Capitol, or the Finley hospital, on high grounds northeast of the city; both large establishments. Armory-square hospital, under Dr. Bliss, in Seventh street (one of the best anywhere), is also temporarily enlarged this summer, with additional tents, sheds, etc. It must have nearly a hundred tents, wards, sheds, and structures of one kind and another. The worst cases are always to be found here. A wanderer like me about Washington pauses on some high land which commands the sweep of the city (one never tires of the noble and ample views presented here, in the

generally fine, soft, peculiar air and light), and has his eyes attracted by these white clusters of barracks in almost every direction. They make a great show in the landscape, and I often use them as landmarks. Some of these clusters are very full of inmates. Counting the whole, with the convalescent camps (whose inmates are often worse off than the sick in the hospitals), they have numbered, in this quarter and just down the Potomac, as high as fifty thousand invalid, disabled, or sick and dying men.

My sketch has already filled up so much room that I shall have to omit any detailed account of the wounded of May and June, 1864, from the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, etc. That would be a long history in itself. The arrivals, the numbers, and the severity of the wounds, out-viewed anything that we have seen before. For days and weeks a melancholy tide set in upon us. The weather was very hot. The wounded had been delayed in coming, and much neglected. Very many of the wounds had worms in them. An unusual proportion mortified. It was among these that, for the first time in my life, I began to be prostrated with real sickness, and was, before the close of the summer, imperatively ordered North by the physician to recuperate and have an entire change of air.

What I know of first Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, etc., makes clear to me that there has been, and is yet, a total lack of science in elastic adaptation to the needs of the wounded after a battle. The hospitals are long afterward filled with proofs of this.

I have seen many battles, their results, but never one where there was

not, during the first few days, an unaccountable and almost total deficiency of everything for the wounded--appropriate sustenance, nursing, cleaning, medicines, stores, etc. (I do not say surgical attendance, because the surgeons cannot do more than human endurance permits.) Whatever pleasant accounts there may be in the papers of the North, this is the actual fact. No thorough previous preparation, no system, no foresight, no genius. Always plenty of stores, no doubt, but always miles away; never where they are needed, and never the proper application. Of all harrowing experiences, none is greater than that of the days following a heavy battle. Scores, hundreds, of the noblest young men on earth, uncomplaining, lie helpless, mangled, faint, alone, and so bleed to death, or die from exhaustion, either actually untouched at all, or with merely the laying of them down and leaving them, when there ought to be means provided to save them.

The reader has doubtless inferred the fact that my visits among the wounded and sick have been as an independent missionary, in my own style, and not as an agent of any commission. Several noble women and men of Brooklyn, Boston, Salem, and Providence, have voluntarily supplied funds at times. I only wish they could see a tithe of the actual work performed by their generous and benevolent assistance among the suffering men.

He who goes among the soldiers with gifts, etc., must beware how he proceeds. It is much more of an art than one would imagine. They are not charity-patients, but American young men, of pride and independence. The spirit in which you treat them, and bestow your donations, is just as

important as the gifts themselves; sometimes more so. Then there is continual discrimination necessary. Each case requires some peculiar adaptation to itself. It is very important to slight nobody--not a single case. Some hospital visitors, especially the women, pick out the handsomest looking soldiers, or have a few for their pets. Of course some will attract you more than others, and some will need more attention than others; but be careful not to ignore any patient. A word, a friendly turn of the eye or touch of the hand in passing, if nothing more.

One hot day toward the middle of June I gave the inmates of Carver hospital a general ice-cream treat, purchasing a large quantity, and going around personally through the wards to see to its distribution.

Here is a characteristic scene in a ward: It is Sunday afternoon (middle of summer, 1864), hot and oppressive, and very silent through the ward. I am taking care of a critical case, now lying in a half lethargy. Near where I sit is a suffering Rebel from the Eighth Louisiana; his name is Irving. He has been here a long time, badly wounded, and lately had his leg amputated. It is not doing very well. Right opposite me is a sick soldier boy laid down with his clothes on, sleeping, looking much wasted, his pallid face on his arm. I see by the yellow trimming on his jacket that he is a cavalry boy. He looks so handsome as he sleeps, one must needs go nearer to him. I step softly over, and find by his card that he is named William Cone, of the First Maine Cavalry, and his folks live in Skowhegan.

Well, poor John Mahay is dead. He died yesterday. His was a painful and lingering case. I have been with him at times for the past fifteen months. He belonged to Company A, One Hundred and First New York, and was shot through the lower region of the abdomen at second Bull Run, August, 1862. One scene at his bedside will suffice for the agonies of nearly two years. The bladder had been perforated by a bullet going entirely through him. Not long since I sat a good part of the morning by his bedside, Ward E, Armory-square; the water ran out of his eyes from the intense pain, and the muscles of his face were distorted, but he utters nothing except a low groan now and then. Hot moist cloths were applied, and relieved him somewhat. Poor Mahay, a mere boy in age, but old in misfortune, he never knew the love of parents, was placed in his infancy in one of the New York charitable institutions, and subsequently bound out to a tyrannical master in Sullivan county (the scars of whose cowhide and club remained yet on his back). His wound here was a most disagreeable one, for he was a gentle, cleanly, and affectionate boy. He found friends in his hospital life, and, indeed, was a universal favorite. He had quite a funeral ceremony.

Through Fourteenth street to the river, and then over the long bridge and some three miles beyond, is the huge collection called the convalescent camp. It is a respectable sized army in itself, for these hospitals, tents, sheds, etc., at times contain from five to ten thousand men. Of course there are continual changes. Large squads are sent off to their regiments or elsewhere, and new men received. Sometimes I found large numbers of paroled returned prisoners here.

During October, November, and December, 1864, I have visited the military hospitals about New York City, but have not room in this article to describe these visits.

I have lately been (November 25) in the Central-park hospital, near One Hundred and Fourth street; it seems to be a well-managed institution. During September, and previously, went many times to the Brooklyn city hospital, in Raymond street, where I found (taken in by contract) a number of wounded and sick from the army. Most of the men were badly off, and without a cent of money, many wanting tobacco. I supplied them, and a few special cases with delicacies; also repeatedly with letter-paper, stamps, envelopes, etc., writing the addresses myself plainly--(a pleased crowd gathering around me as I directed for each one in turn.) This Brooklyn hospital is a bad place for soldiers, or anybody else. Cleanliness, proper nursing, watching, etc., are more deficient than in any hospital I know. For dinner on Sundays I invariably found nothing but rice and molasses. The men all speak well of Drs. Yale and Kissam for kindness, patience, etc., and I think, from what I saw, there are also young medical men. In its management otherwise, this is the poorest hospital I have been in, out of many hundreds.

Among places, apart from soldiers', visited lately (December 7) I must specially mention the great Brooklyn general hospital and other public institutions at Flatbush, including the extensive lunatic asylum, under charge of Drs. Chapin and Reynolds. Of the latter (and I presume I might

include these county establishments generally) I have deliberately to put on record about the profoundest satisfaction with professional capacity, completeness of house arrangements to ends required, and the right vital spirit animating all, that I have yet found in any public curative institution among civilians.

In Washington, in camp and everywhere, I was in the habit of reading to the men. They were very fond of it, and liked declamatory, poetical pieces. Miles O'Reilly's pieces were also great favorites. I have had many happy evenings with the men. We would gather in a large group by ourselves, after supper, and spend the time in such readings, or in talking, and occasionally by an amusing game called the game of Twenty Questions.

For nurses, middle-aged women and mothers of families are best. I am compelled to say young ladies, however refined, educated, and benevolent, do not succeed as army nurses, though their motives are noble; neither do the Catholic nuns, among these home-born American young men. Mothers full of motherly feeling, and however illiterate, but bringing reminiscences of home, and with the magnetic touch of hands, are the true women nurses. Many of the wounded are between fifteen and twenty years of age.

I should say that the Government, from my observation, is always full of anxiety and liberality toward the sick and wounded. The system in operation in the permanent hospitals is good, and the money flows without stint. But the details have to be left to hundreds and thousands of

subordinates and officials. Among these, laziness, heartlessness, gouging, and incompetency are more or less prevalent. Still, I consider the permanent hospitals, generally, well conducted.

A very large proportion of the wounded come up from the front without a cent of money in their pockets. I soon discovered that it was about the best thing I could do to raise their spirits and show them that somebody cared for them, and practically felt a fatherly or brotherly interest in them, to give them small sums, in such cases, using tact and discretion about it.

A large majority of the wounds are in the arms and legs. But there is every kind of wound in every part of the body. I should say of the sick, from my experience in the hospitals, that the prevailing maladies are typhoid fever and the camp fevers generally, diarrhoea, catarrhal affections and bronchitis, rheumatism and pneumonia. These forms of sickness lead, all the rest follow. There are twice as many sick as there are wounded. The deaths range from six to ten per cent of those under treatment.

I must bear my most emphatic testimony to the zeal, manliness, and professional spirit and capacity generally prevailing among the surgeons, many of them young men, in the hospitals and the army. I will not say much about the exceptions, for they are few (but I have met some of those few, and very foolish and airish they were). I never ceased to find the best young men, and the hardest and most disinterested workers, among these

surgeons, in the hospitals. They are full of genius, too. I have seen many hundreds of them, and this is my testimony.

During my two years in the hospitals and upon the field, I have made over six hundred visits, and have been, as I estimate, among from eighty thousand to one hundred thousand of the wounded and sick, as sustainer of spirit and body in some slight degree, in their time of need. These visits varied from an hour or two, to all day or night; for with dear or critical cases I watched all night. Sometimes I took up my quarters in the hospital, and slept or watched there several nights in succession. I may add that I am now just resuming my occupation in the hospitals and camps for the winter of 1864-5, and probably to continue the seasons ensuing.

To many of the wounded and sick, especially the youngsters, there is something in personal love, caresses, and the magnetic flood of sympathy and friendship, that does, in its way, more good than all the medicine in the world. I have spoken of my regular gifts of delicacies, money, tobacco, special articles of food, knick-knacks, etc., etc. But I steadily found more and more that I could help, and turn the balance in favor of cure, by the means here alluded to, in a curiously large proportion of cases. The American soldier is full of affection and the yearning for affection. And it comes wonderfully grateful to him to have this yearning gratified when he is laid up with painful wounds or illness, far away from home, among strangers. Many will think this merely sentimentalism, but I know it is the most solid of facts. I believe that even the moving around among the men, or through the ward, of a hearty,

healthy, clean, strong, generous-souled person, man or woman, full of humanity and love, sending out invisible, constant currents thereof, does immense good to the sick and wounded.

To those who might be interested in knowing it, I must add, in conclusion, that I have tried to do justice to all the suffering that fell in my way.

While I have been with wounded and sick in thousands of cases from the New England States, and from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and from Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, and the Western States, I have been with more or less from all the States North and South, without exception. I have been with many from the border States, especially from Maryland and Virginia, and found far more Union Southerners than is supposed. I have been with many Rebel officers and men among our wounded, and given them always what I had, and tried to cheer them the same as any. I have been among the army teamsters considerably, and indeed always find myself drawn to them. Among the black soldiers, wounded or sick, and in the contraband camps, I also took my way whenever in their neighborhood, and I did what I could for them.

W. W.

From the New York Times, December 11, 1864.