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Letters of appreciation of work of Australian nursing sisters in India

527/27

DEFENCE
A.
527 27 139

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

DG3KQ

MINUTE PAPER.

(This side only to be written on.)

C.4765.

SUBJECT: RE LETTER FROM D.M.S. INDIA

The enclosed letter is a reply to a private letter of mine regarding the supply of Medical Officers in Australia.

The latter part of this letter marked in Red is very gratifying. Would it be possible to publish it in Australian Orders?

RECORDS
3-MAR-1919
A.G. DEFENCE
SECRETARY C.G.S.

W. A. H. Stewart
Director General, A.A.M.S.

12.10.17.

C.G.S.
RECEIVED

Referred as to there being any objection from your point of view, the Wagin station Field Force being referred to.

24/10/17

W. Beecham
A.G.

9.9.17

FILED
7 MAR 1918

There is no objection to the publication of this extract.

J. H. G. G. S.

P.A.
3/3/19
D.M.S.

P.A.
9.8.8
3/3/18

Obtains
The A.G. agrees with your request
but you please frame a suitable
order for what you desire

3/11/17

W. A. H. Stewart
D.G.

PRESIDENT.
HON. MR. C. CARMICHAEL, C.S.I., I.C.S.

PATRON.
H.E. LORD WILLINGDON OF RATTON, G.C.I.E.,
GOVERNOR OF BOMBAY.



BOMBAY YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

(CENTRAL BRANCH—WODEHOUSE ROAD, FORT.)

BRANCH CHAIRMAN,
W. TURNER GREEN, Esq.

TELEGRAMS:
"MANHOOD."



TEL. 474.

SECRETARY, A. L. HINDS.
HOUSE SECRETARY, P. ANQUETIL.
PHYSICAL DIRECTOR, D. MUNRO.

Name of the Hospital, Colaba.

Bombay, July 4, 1917.

Dear Mr. Anquetil:

In my story in to-day's Times of India of the sinking of the Kongolia and our subsequent experiences on the native governed Island of Janjira I mentioned that three Australian Red Cross Nurses, Sisters Lawson, Vicar-Foote and Despard gave extremely valuable help to many of the ship-wrecked passengers and crew, who sorely needed their attention in a trying time. So also did Lady Anderson, wife of General Sir Robt. Anderson, whose kindness and care could not have been excelled. Remember that in our life boat (16) was a man scalded and skinned - actually skinned - from head to foot, who had been delirious in the boat but still lived, while as for myself the explosion had flung me on the top deck and re-broken an old break in my left leg - originally the result of German Rifle fire in Oct. 1914 when I had both legs broken.

What I should like to emphasise however is the noble way these great unselfish women went about their task. Imagine we had been eight hours at sea in a strong monsoon and luckily landed on a reef bound shore of a native state, with nothing but what we wore and hard biscuits and water, and the determination to make the best of everything.

The ladies were in the first boat to land, and when our boat got in and they were told we had wounded aboard, they immediately prepared a temporary Red Cross Hospital. This was no more than an awning rigged up out of the boats sail, but it was a bit of shelter from the pouring rain, and a rug that Sir Robert Anderson had hastily thrown in his life boat at the time of the explosion, was placed on the ground. Poor Tom Evans, the scalded boiler maker was in a fearful state, the skin was hanging from him in stripes all over his arms, legs and body - even his face was peeled and raw and the poor fellow was hardly conscious. But Sister Lawson and the other ladies did all that was possible for him.

We had no oil or comforting ointments of course, but someone remembered that in the life boat was a tin of crude oil, put there for replenishing the lamps. This was brought ashore and as there were no bandages,



the Sisters and Lady Anderson too, pulled off their underskirts without a moments hesitation and tore them into bandages which they soaked in the crude oil and placed on the raw body of the poor fellow who was dying by inches. It may have been a hopeless task, but the efforts of these self denying Australian women undoubtedly eased the dying man's pain, and when at last about 10.30 that night he passed away it was a peaceful end. In that there was at least a comforting thought for the great women who had done everything possible under conditions of stress and strain they had never experienced before and never will again I devoutly hope.

With me it was the same Sister Mawson, Miss Murphy and Lady Anderson set my leg on a broken oar blade which I afterwards discovered was padded with the whole of a ~~lady's~~ lady's underskirt. I have it now, a blue and white striped skirt it is, made in Paris, and I hope to be pardoned for sticking to it as a "souvenir". The leg was badly bruised and very much swollen (two or three excited people jumped on it as I lay in the life boat - jumped on it from Mongolia's deck, that is but they did not know in the excitement that my leg was broken) but Sister Mawson bathed it the night through and all next day and night too, with sea water for which I was thankful.

Yes, believe me, Australia has reason to be proud of such grand women as these sisters (and also Lady Anderson) who could rise to supreme heights of noble work at a time when most women would have been incapable of effort by reason of the trying experiences they had gone through themselves. I thanked them as we parted and I thank them again - and especially do I thank Sister Mawson - for help and sympathetic encouragement at a time when both were sorely needed.

With sincere appreciation of your own personal kindness to me since my arrival in Colaba Hospital.

Faithfully yours,

(Sd) R. Reading.

Ex Armee-Belge.
Chevalier of the Order of Leopold.



Lucknow

22/7/17

Dear Miss Davis,

As you would probably like to know how the four of your nurses who served under me in the Station Hospital, Lucknow, did, I am writing to tell you. They were and are, as you will remember, Miss Kitson, Lummer, Rowe and Vowles. They are quite the best nurses we have had here, since the War, have done their work completely to my satisfaction and that of the Lady Superintendant and were thoroughly trustworthy and reliable. If it comes to grading them, Miss Kitson is an absolute treasure as a Surgical Nurse and Theatre Sister. In my limited experience she is by far the best nurse I have met. Miss Lummer comes next and is a first class Nurse in the Medical Wards. Miss Rowe and Miss Lumm Vowles are almost equally good and it is difficult to discriminate between the four. They have been kept to the above work but I have no doubt they would be as good if changed round. There has never been a word of complaint, professionally or socially against them all the time despite the fact that the work was new to them and I

am a hard taskmaster, expecting everything to be absolutely clean and properly done.

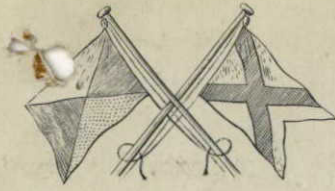
If this letter may be of any use in getting them any small recognition later I beg of you to use it. Everyone who came in contact with them was very fond of them and this, I think, speaks well for them, as the Military Hospital Routine and the life in an Indian ~~Un~~ country Station was quite strange to them and they might easily have rubbed people up the wrong way if they had not been extremely efficient in their duties and nice socially.

Yours sincerely

A. Danhall

Lieut. Col. R. A. M. C.

O. C. Station Hospital. Lucknow.



P. & O. B. I.

P. & O. S. N. Co.
S. S.

DEFENCE
527/27/139
A.

22/7/17

H. M. H. S. Bartha
c/o G. P. O
Bombay.

Mr. Miss Da vies

I feel I would like to write
you this Confidential note & then perhaps
you would be able to help me in getting
Miss M. Da vies promotion for her.
I sent a Confidential Report to Miss O'Farrell
in which I strongly recommended her for promotion
- You see she has been with me now for
12 months & she may any time now be
transferred from the Shop I feel it my duty

to do the best for my girls when they have
learned so well for me

Miss Blake is an excellent nurse
good ward manager & very good
disciplinarian - I should like some one
who knows her. Just to know what I think
of her, because you see when she leaves the
Ship she will pass into strange hands.
I hope you don't mind my writing about -
this but I thought of Mr. Casey knew what I
thought of her after having her on my Ship for
twelve months & might help her in the future
It must be quite 8 months since I was in her
recommendation for promotion

Believe me
Yours sincerely
Lucas A Cowley

Marion H. H. S. Jewett

No. 20378/9

D.M.S.2

DEFENCE
527/27/139
A.
Army Head Quarters, India,

MEDICAL BRANCH,

Simla, 20th AUGUST 1917.

FROM

THE DIRECTOR,

MEDICAL SERVICES IN INDIA,

TO

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

AUSTRALIAN ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter dated Melbourne the 18th June, I beg to inform you that 30 Nurses were dispatched to Salonika via Egypt by the mail boat which left Bombay on the 23rd July 1917. These 30 Nurses could not be sent by the Somali as requested by you, for the reasons given in telegram No. 10633, dated the 18th July 1917, from His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India to His Excellency the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, a copy of which is attached hereto.

With regard to your offer to send us about 12 elderly medical men :- At the present time we are not seriously in want of senior Officers, but rather of junior Officers for ordinary hospital work or regimental duty. Our difficulties, indeed, are so great that we are now taking on medical women for duty in hospitals in India, thus releasing a certain number of young officers for more active work.

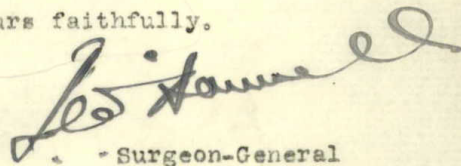
The difficulty of finding sufficient medical men for our various fronts is very great, and I can quite realize that you too find it far from easy to meet existing demands on Australia.

In conclusion, I desire to thank you very much for the splendid way in which you have assisted us as regards Nurses. Those you have sent have proved invaluable, and have done and

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and are doing magnificent work, and we are doing everything in our power to make their time in India as pleasant as possible. I recently inspected a British Hospital at Tank, within the sphere of Operations of the Waziristan Field Force, and I was very much impressed with the resourceful way in which the five Nurses of the Australian Army Nursing Service had grappled with and overcome all difficulties under most trying climatic conditions.

Yours faithfully,



- Surgeon-General

Director Medical Services in India



Copy of a telegram from His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India, to His Excellency the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne, No.10633, dated the 18th July 1917.

Your telegram dated 26th June. 30 Nurses will be despatched to Egypt by earliest available vessels. 22nd August mentioned in your telegram was regarded as date Nurses from India should arrive Egypt. No copy of your Director, Medical Services' letter to Matron Davis dated 13th June was received by Director, Medical Services in India and instructions therein specifying 22nd July were not communicated to him until 11th July. It was than too late to collect and despatch nurses to Colombo either by sea or land in time to meet the "Somali".