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Gertrude Fenner D.C.

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THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

by

*Gertrude Fenner, D.C.**

"Too much cannot be said in praise of this Noble Order"

Seen on the battlefields of the world since their foundation in 1633, the Daughters of Charity have rendered invaluable nursing service. The challenge of the Spanish American War was no exception. Faithful to the teachings of Saint Vincent de Paul, "to save the souls of all through the medium of their bodies,"¹ they responded to the appeal of the government of the United States for the sick and wounded soldiers.

The beginning of the war

The strained relations that existed between the Cubans and their Spanish overlords in the late nineteenth century broke out into revolution. President William McKinley "was confronted by a strong public demand that the United States should do something that would help the Cubans gain autonomy, if not complete independence."² Not wishing to oppose the clamor, the president on April 11, 1898, sent a message to

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¹Paul Renaudon, *Saint Vincent de Paul*. Translated by Cecil Kerr. (London and Edinburgh, 1930), 71.

²John S. Bassett, "Makers of a New Nation", *The Pageant of America* (New Haven, 1928), 198

Congress to intervene in Cuba "for the sake of humanity, for the protection of American lives and property, and for the purpose of ending a needless costly war."³ On April 25, war was declared against Spain, a war that Spain was ill prepared to assume in terms of the country's resources. The United States also entered the war with poor management.

Light clothing, medicines, ambulances, tents, and means of transportation were not promptly furnished, and a great wave of indignation swept over the country when it became known that the U.S. soldiers were being fed on "embalmed beef"... A commission was appointed by the President to investigate the alleged mismanagement of the War Department.⁴

Lay nurses in the war

Because of this need, Clara Barton, the "Florence Nightingale of America" and her Red Cross nurses offered their services to the United States government in 1898. After an official delay of a few months, they received word to report to the different camps. Barton and her nurses were greatly influenced by the work of Florence Nightingale.

Florence Nightingale first met the Daughters of Charity during a visit to Paris in 1849-1850. There, she learned the technique of "caring for soldiers in war time."⁵ In 1853 she arranged an extended stay in order to study their nursing

³Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Political and Social History of the United States* (New York, 1926), 420

⁴James W. Garner and Henry C. Lodge, *The History of Nations* (New York, 1932), 14:1034.

⁵Grace H. Sherwood, "The Sister of Charity: Pioneer", *Catholic World* (1931), 133:586

work. Events prevented her from doing so. When the Crimean War (1853-1856) broke out, the British public was outraged to learn that almost no provision had been made for the wounded. This stood in stark contrast with the work done by the Daughters among the French wounded. The British government called on Nightingale to go to the Crimea and do the same for the British.

Brooking no delay, Miss Nightingale and a band of co-workers set out for Scutari, near Constantinople, where the British had been given a barracks for hospital use.⁶ On the way she stopped with her party in Paris to see at first hand the nursing work of the Daughters of Charity. . .

She asked the Sister Servant to permit them to spend some days with the Sisters to see them at work, to study their rules and regulations and to become initiated into their manner of life. She took copious notes of all she saw and felt confident that she could copy exactly everything she had observed.⁷

Through the courtesy of Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne, the superior general of the Daughters of Charity, her party was allowed to observe the Daughters at the Maison de la Providence,⁸ where she "secured the practical introduction to hospital management."⁹

Of a religious turn of mind, Miss Nightingale herself practiced consistently the lessons that she had learned during her

⁶Ibid., 585.

⁷Ibid., 588.

⁸Mary R.S. Andrews, *A Lost Commander: Florence Nightingale* (New York, 1929), 70.

⁹James J. Walsh, *The History of Nursing* (New York, 1929), 222.

sojourn with the Daughters of Charity. She always credited the Catholic sisterhoods, especially the Daughters, with being the primary inspiration for her nursing endeavors. In recompense, she received from her country the highest encomiums according anyone by the British government.

Clara Barton, influenced by Florence Nightingale's vision of nursing, became a prime mover in organizing the lay nurses who served in the Spanish American War of 1898.

Religious Nursing Communities

At the same time, the idea of communities of religious that would volunteer for nursing care arose as a result of the zeal of Miss Ellen L. Dorsey.

When the government began hiring nurses, Miss Ellen L. Dorsey, a Catholic author, sent a letter to the various Sisterhoods explaining how urgently nurses were needed and setting forth the qualifications that were demanded of army nurses. All nurses should take the oath of allegiance to the United States and accept a remuneration of \$30 per month. Miss Dorsey's appeal met with spontaneous response so that she could present for contract upward of 200 Sisters.¹⁰

Out of eight religious communities and 282 sisters responding to the nursing need, 189 were Daughters of Charity.¹¹ Four of the five sisters that laid down their lives in the service of their country were Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Maryland. They were Sister Anastasia Burke, who died

¹⁰Benjamin J. Blied, "Catholic Aspects of the Spanish American War", *Social Justice Review* 39 (1947): 23-25.

¹¹*Ibid.*

November 3, 1898, and Sister Mary Agnes Sweeney, who died October 23, 1898, both at Huntsville, Alabama; Sister Mary Larkin, who died November 3, 1898, at Ponce, Puerto Rico; Sister Caroline Wolfe, who died October 15, 1898, at Baltimore, Maryland.¹²

The Reverend John F. Cummins, pastor of the church of the Sacred Heart, New York, said in a lecture given on the evening of October 30, 1898:

But there was a band of heroic women who plunged into the deepest part of the fever-stricken camps to aid the sick and restore the youthful soldiers to their sorrow-stricken mothers. These patient women never received a word of praise or commendation for their services at Montauk. I refer to the white-bonneted Sisters of Charity.

They went at the call of the President who asked for two hundred and two hundred responded. Within two weeks, four have died and at present ten are suffering from typhoid fever. Is not that record worthy of recognition? Some of these have done service in the Civil War.¹³

Responding to the need, Mother Mariana of Emmitsburg offered Daughters of Charity as volunteers. Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C. became the distribution center. "Sister Beatrice was the medium of communication with the War Department. Sisters went to Camp Alger, Kentucky, Montauk, Chickamauga, Fort Lexington, Knoxville, and

¹²Ibid.

¹³"Military Hospitals", manuscript in the Archives of Saint Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, vol. 2.

Huntsville, Alabama.”¹⁴ A group of Daughters was sent “to the Cuban battle lines to care for maimed and wounded soldiers and subsequently, brought many of them to Providence Hospital for convalescent care.”¹⁵

The correspondence of Mother Mariana requesting and acknowledging the work of the Daughters in their moving endeavors is numerous, including letters from Cardinal Gibbons, who said:

I am delighted to learn from you that the Government has asked and obtained the Sisters’ service in Santiago and elsewhere. I hope that you will be able to accede to all the Government’s demands. The Sisters’ beautiful example and unselfish devotion will be an object lesson to all who witness their faithful attendance on the sick.¹⁶

In the following month, the cardinal reported:

I rejoice to learn that one hundred and sixty-seven Sisters of Charity are now engaged in the good work of attending the soldiers in the hospitals. The sacrifices of the Sisters are very great, but great in proportion will be their merit.¹⁷

President McKinley, who knew well the work of the Daughters of Charity during the Civil War, remarked “Nothing could please me better than to have the entire nursing staff

¹⁴*The Washington Post Magazine*, November 5, 193.

¹⁵“Annual Report of Providence Hospital, Washington, D.C.”, Archives of Saint Joseph’s College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, 1923, p. 18.

¹⁶Letter of August 16, 1898, in “Military Hospitals,” vol. 1.

¹⁷Letter of September 6, 1898, *ibid.*

made up of white-winged Sisters of Charity who had rendered such valuable service during the Civil War.”¹⁸

The Portsmouth Navy Yard

Portsmouth Navy Yard in New Hampshire saw the arrival of 1600 prisoners of war who had been taken from the fleet of Admiral Cervera, destroyed at Santiago on July 3, 1898. With them were American wounded who “were brought ashore in litters and taken to the naval hospital and others suffering from malaria.”¹⁹

At the time the hospital was under the supervision of the Red Cross. Doctor Claborne, chief surgeon in charge of the hospital, sensing the need for night nurses, requested Mother Mariana to send him some Daughters of Charity to act in that capacity.

In the month of July, “Sisters Magdalen Kelleher, Cecilia Beck, Chrysostom Moynahan, Victorine Salazar, and Mary Larkin were sent at once from the Central House in Emmitsburg, Maryland.”²⁰ Upon their arrival, they called on Doctor Claborne to make arrangements concerning the care of the patients. The little conference terminated with the understanding that the Daughters would have complete charge of the hospital from six o’clock in the evening until six o’clock the following morning. Every day in the late afternoon, the Daughters left their headquarters at Saint Joseph’s School, Portsmouth, also conducted by the Daughters of Charity and at the time under the supervision of Sister Agnes Lally, to care tenderly during the long vigils of the night for the fever-

¹⁸Helen Bailly Barberey, *Elizabeth Seton*. Translated by Joseph B. Code. (New York, 1927), 508.

¹⁹C.J. Dutton, “American Prison Camp”, *Commonweal* 33 (1941):270.

²⁰“Military Hospitals”, vol. 2

stricken, battle-scarred, homesick boys of the Spanish American War. Three of the Daughters were given charge of the Americans, and two were placed with the Spaniards. Each evening the day superintendent would hand over the keys to the sister in charge and on the following morning, the sister would return the keys to her. In this way an amicable feeling tended to knit strong bonds between the Red Cross and the Daughters.

Sister Victorine, one of the Spanish-speaking Daughters of Charity, had many interesting experiences.

As I was about to enter my ward on the first night, I was met by a nurse who told me that the Spanish soldiers had been swearing almost continuously. I listened and much to her surprise, I said, "they are praying *En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo. Amén.*" A hush fell over the place soon to be followed by, "Madre, Madre," as many of the prisoners wept for joy. They were delighted to see the Sisters and to know that they would be with them during the night. Some of them wanted to go to confession, but I told them that I could not hear confessions. "Tell God that you are sorry and wish to be forgiven and I will tell him also."

One poor man who had been terribly slashed on his back was given no attention because he could not get better, so the nurse told me. Each night when I went on duty, I would visit him first and try to make him as comfortable as possible. After a few weeks, he was well on the way to recovery, for which I thanked God."²¹

²¹Oral history interview with Sister Victorine, D.C., Saint Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, November 27, 1947.

The Spanish prisoners were declared "free men" in the latter part of August 1898. When the sisters went on night duty on the evening of August 31, the Spaniards informed them that "Admiral Cervera had just come to make preparations for their removal within a few days."²² The transfer of the patients, many of whom were helpless because of their maimed bodies, had to be worked out by the Daughters. Three busy hours were spent on the appointed day, preparing the seriously ill for departure. By six o'clock, all were bound for New York, where they met their Spanish comrades in preparation for their return to Spain.

Fort Thomas, Kentucky

The blue grass country of Kentucky was the site of Fort Thomas, commanded by Major William Hall, who had hundreds of patients under his supervision. When the first ten Daughters of Charity arrived on August 15, 1898, there was little semblance of order, but the ten lay nurses were doing their best to meet the crisis of the time.

Sister Lucia James, superioress of Hotel Dieu Hospital in New Orleans, and the lay superintendent worked well together, the latter often consulting Sister Lucia when difficult situations presented themselves. After the resignation of the superintendent, Sister Lucia was given complete charge of the hospital. "The number of Daughters was increased to twenty and when the southern camps closed, the soldiers were transferred to the hospital at Fort Thomas."²³

Many times the nurses, after watching the systematic work of the Daughters, would imitate in their own wards what they

²²Sister M. Magdalen Wirmel, O.S.F., "Sisterhoods in the Spanish-American War", *Historical Records and Studies* 32 (1941):26-37.

²³Sister Isabel Purcell to author, October 21, 1947.

had observed. "One of the nurses remarked, 'I never saw the like of those men. When we ask them to do anything, they give an excuse, but when a Sister asks, they would try to stand on their head for her. Everything is 'Sister' with them.'"²⁴

Gratitude expressed by all the men found its echo in these words of one of the patients, "Just wait, Sister, until I get my pay and I will give you a fine present."²⁵

On September 24, 1898, a letter from Doctor Anita Newcomb McGee to Major W. R. Hall gave him information concerning the Daughters of Charity.

I have been asked to write you on a subject of the Sisters of Charity who are now at your hospital. They are among the finest nurses in their order, some being superintendents of hospitals, surgical nurses of standing, and their Mother Superior is very desirous that they should be transferred to Puerto Rico where a number of other Sisters have been sent. She makes a particular request, however, that while they remain at Fort Thomas, they should have certain wards to themselves and not be placed under the orders of the other nurses. These Sisters of Charity, in other hospitals and camps, have given the greatest satisfaction and I think you will find that no mistake has been made. If you are able to give [to] their exclusive control a ward or wards in your hospital. . . . kindly inform me thereof.²⁶

²⁴"Military Hospitals", vol. 5.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Sister Lucia wrote to Mother Mariana telling her that Major Hall had received orders to send the Daughters to Puerto Rico, but he had refused because he did not wish to cripple his hospital by having the Daughters removed. Fort Thomas functioned until the early part of February, 1899, when the government ordered it closed.

The following letter from Major Hall to Sister Lucia, written from Fort Thomas, January 29, 1899, testifies to his satisfaction.²⁷

My dear Sister,

Before we part, I wish to say to you that I have appreciated most heartily the great help that you have been to me this summer. You and the other Sisters have been constant in your duties to the sick; you have willingly done all that was required by myself or by the doctors in charge of wards. The presence in the hospital of women so devoted, so cheerful, so kind and religious, has had a wonderful influence on the male attendants. My work has been made much easier by the knowledge that the Sisters would never, upon any occasion, neglect patients; and that peace and goodwill would always reign wherever they were. I wish that you would express to your Mother Superior how much I feel indebted to your Order. As for myself, I am unable to put on paper the fractional part of my admiration for your character, and appreciation of your kindness and efficiency while in charge of all the women nurses. This may be known to myself but can never be expressed to others.

²⁷"Military Hospitals", vol. 1.

It is with heartfelt sorrow that I part with the Sisters, and my prayers follow you all.

W.R. Hall

Five Camps: Alger, Thomas, Wheeler, Poland and Hamilton

Camp Alger, situated not far from Washington, D.C., was a "pest-hole, a nursery of typhoid."²⁸ For that camp, twenty Daughters were requested by Major Devine. Before their arrival, a Protestant major, given charge of the camp, said that the Daughters "were not wanted". When this news reached the surgeon general, he regretted the major's stand. Negotiations were entered into and it was finally decided that ten Daughters would be retained until Camp Alger would be abandoned.

We were in Camp Alger from the middle of August until nearly the middle of September. One of our Sisters nursed back to life a Lieutenant, for which his comrades were especially grateful. Our hospital was composed of tents, four in a line, ten sick men in each and an orderly for each tent. The doctor was a perfect gentleman, so considerate of us. He was the only one who gave us free time on Sunday. During all that period, we had neither Mass nor Holy Communion. We were domiciled at a country house, a mile or more from the camp, and boarded with three elderly women. We rode back and forth, morning, noon, and night, to this house in rough farm wagons that gave us many a jolt. The weather was hot and dry, and we breathe in many particles of dust.²⁹

²⁸Ellis P. Oberholtzer, *A History of the United States since the Civil War* (New York, 1937) 5:553.

²⁹Sister Isabelle McCarthy, to author, August, 1947.

From Montauk Point, New York, twenty Daughters were sent to Camp Thomas, Chickamauga, situated in Georgia near the Alabama border. Later, the number increased to sixty. This site was chosen because it was the property of the United States government and conveniently situated on a high attractive plateau. But it was unsuited for a military camp, for the ground, covered with a few inches of loam, had a deeper bed of dense clay extending everywhere to bedrock. Dampness and cold were prevalent after a rain and even after prolonged periods of sun. Water collected in pools where it was held by the clay and regardless of regulations, the troops drank it, although it was contaminated and spread infection.

“When we arrived, we were met by Major Bushman and other officers. After roll call, we pledged allegiance to the flag. . . a beautiful sight indeed.”³⁰ Under the superintendency of Sister Stella Boyle of Saint Vincent’s Hospital, Indianapolis, and her assistant, Sister Benedicta, the Daughters managed to effect wonders under the most trying circumstances.³¹ “The water had to be brought some ten miles in a wagon. We had to use it very carefully. At first, we lived in tents, but Major Bushman had the boys build two structures of wood, each of which held thirty sisters.”³²

The sleeping quarters of the Daughters were about a mile from the hospital, but the distance was no hindrance to the constant care rendered day and night to the several hundred typhoid cases that needed untiring vigilance. As the number of patients lessened, the Daughters were detailed to other camps and hospitals.

Camp Wheeler, in Huntsville, Alabama, under the com-

³⁰Sister DeSales Sceery to author, September 1947.

³¹Sister Mary Ellen Fitzpatrick to author, September, 1947.

³²Ibid.

mand of Major Davis, awaited the Daughters' arrival. Two hundred patients were nursed back to health by fifteen Daughters of Charity, who had arrived from Camp Wikoff at Montauk Point, New York.

At Camp Poland, Knoxville, Tennessee, about one hundred and sixty service men were cared for by the Daughters. Among the latter was a school sister who acted as aide, working with the others for the patients, day and night. When General Alger and his staff visited the camp, he remarked, "There's a big difference since these ladies have been here."³³

Though the conditions under which the Daughters lived at Camp Poland were not ideal, all worked with high morale for the welfare of the patients. Each Daughter was furnished with an army cot, two blankets and a pillow. "We had no wash basin and but one pail, half full of water, which we dealt out in a tumbler divided among three or four Daughters."³⁴ Chief Surgeon Bagley was very concerned for the Daughters and provided for them in every way possible.

On September 15, 1898, fifty Daughters of Charity volunteered to care for the sick at Camp Hamilton, Kentucky, where six hundred patients awaited their attention. There, as elsewhere, privations were encountered, but these Daughters knew that good nutrition was essential to the soldiers' health. About one third of the men were on full diet, one third on light diet, and the others on soups and broth. Before the arrival of the Daughters, the soup was prepared in a boiler in the yard, but it was not long before this matter was changed so that all the cooking was done in the kitchen and the meals, which before had been very late, were now served at regular hours, much to the satisfaction of the patients.

³³"Military Hospitals", vol. 4.

³⁴Ibid.

Cuba and Camp Cuba Libre

Nurses trained in immunology were in great demand, so Surgeon General Geut a mile from the hospital, but the distance was no hindrance to the constant care rendered day and night to the several hundred typhoid cases that needed untiring vigilance. As the number of patients lessened, the Daughters were detailed to other camps and hospitals.

Camp Wheeler, in Huntsville, Alabama, under the command of Major Davis, awaited the Daughters' arrival. Two hundred patients were nursed back to health by fifteen Daughters of Charity, who had arrived from Camp Wview, he expressed his gratitude for what the Daughters were doing for the sick and at the same time recalled the services rendered by the Community during the Civil War.

The following day, August 9, 1898, the five Daughters traveled to New York, but on their arrival they were refused permission to board the *Yale*. Relations between the army and navy were not good and so many misunderstandings occurred. The officer had received no word from Washington about the Daughters' sailing on the *Yale*, so they and a group of male nurses, also trained in immunology, were not allowed to board the vessel. The Daughters went to Saint Vincent's Hospital, conducted by the Sisters of Charity of Mount Saint Vincent on the Hudson, and there awaited further orders.

On August 11, after instructions had been received from Washington, the Daughters and male nurses set sail for Cuba. A few days later a band of seven Daughters left on the *Yucatan* from Tampa, Florida, for Santiago, Cuba, where they arrived on August 19, 1898. They went to the hospital conducted by the Daughters of Charity. In the afternoon, General Leonard Wood and Doctor Hall called to inform the Daughters that they had orders to have them return on the *Yale* with 1300 soldiers, 200 of whom were sick. When the Daughters returned to the transports to take charge of the sick soldiers who were being transferred to the steamer, the joy of the

patients was evident by the way they saluted the Daughters as they pressed among them. It was not long before the Daughters divided the 200 patients among them and nursed them day and night.

During the voyage of the *Yale*, one of the sisters wrote:

The men were suffering from fever and diarrhea. Poor fellows! We had the five gallons of Ducros that you gave us on leaving New Orleans, for emergency cases, and the five gallons of Quina Larosche. We took the Ducros around among the men, and how glad they were to have this good tonic. . . We tried to make it last, but it was not much among so many, and so, we would go around at eight in the morning and at eleven at night giving the doses. Twice a day, we administer the Quina Larosche. Poor men, they were as happy as children to have the Sisters nursing them, and their eyes follow us with gratitude as we pass through the hospital department of the ship and over the crowded decks. One of the poor men died today. The Sisters knelt beside him to the last. Tonight, we will be on American soil.³⁵

From October 1 to November 1, 1898, Camp Cuba Libre was in operation at Jacksonville, Florida. When the Daughters arrived, Colonel Mans, the chief surgeon, said to Sister Adelaide, "Sister, I am glad to see you. I have been anxiously awaiting the sisters. There is much for you to do and we will do all in our power to make you as comfortable as we can. I assign you to our largest hospital, the division hospital, where

³⁵"Military Hospitals", vol. 2.

typhoid is raging. I know you will do all you can for the poor boys, and I assure you, your work will be appreciated by all."³⁶

Finding the management and discipline at a very low ebb, the Daughters used the utmost tact and patience to arrange everything into a system that worked. It was not long before the nurses were imitating the methods of the Daughters and soon their wards became replicas of what they had seen with the Daughters. One of the matrons remarked to Sister Adelaide, "The government thinks a great deal of you sisters." At the request of the sisters, the doctors made many improvements, including the erection of wooden buildings.

Camp Wikoff

One hundred and eighteen miles from New York City on the eastern end of Long Island, Camp Wikoff at Montauk Point was a city of tents. There, on August 15, 1898, the fever worn troops from the tropical camps sought relief from a "war in which bacilli were vastly more devastating than bullets."³⁷

In the beginning, accommodations were of the poorest, but by dint of hard work and efficient management, things began to show improvement. "The sick are being cared for, at present, by fifty Daughters of Charity and sixty female trained nurses."³⁸ Some of the patients were in need of the skillful touch of a surgeon's hand, so "an operating tent was erected and placed in working with the assistance of two Sisters of Charity and Acting Assistant Surgeon Greenleaf."³⁹

Because of the Red Cross being unable to furnish all the

³⁶"Military Hospitals", vol. 4.

³⁷Victor Robinson, *White Caps* (New York, 1947), 224.

³⁸Nicholas Senn, M.D., *Medico-Surgical Aspects of the Spanish-American War* (Chicago, 1900), 177.

³⁹*Ibid.*

nurses that were demanded, Emmitsburg was again asked for nursing Daughters of Charity. Daughters from Milwaukee, Chicago, Washington, Baltimore, Mount Hope (Maryland), and the naval hospital at Norfolk (Virginia), swelled the number of "white coronettes" to 112 Daughters under the superintendency of Sister Adelaide d'Aunoy.

When they arrived at Camp Wikoff, the annex hospital - which in time became larger than the central hospital - was put under their supervision, together with two wards of the general hospital. Doctor Nicholas Senn, one of Chicago's outstanding surgical specialists, expressed his deep appreciation when he found among the Daughters Sister Mary Paul, formerly of Saint Joseph's Hospital in Chicago and for a number of years his assistant in the operating room. It was the same Doctor Senn who had inaugurated surgical operations on the battlefield.

President McKinley visited Camp Wikoff on September 10, 1898. As he passed through the tents, he saluted the sick and then "shook hands with the sisters."⁴⁰ Asked if anything was needed, Sister Adelaide requested more orderlies. "Turning to Major Alamany, the President said, 'Have forty orderlies detailed to the Sisters' wards tomorrow morning.' It was done. After the first two weeks, we had very little to suffer at Camp Wikoff."⁴¹

The sisters had been requested to remain until the camp closed. Toward the middle of September, 1898, the sisters were transferred to other camps or hospitals.

The scenes which I am about to describe are the
saddest recollection of a lifetime, and as I recall the

⁴⁰Sister Margaret Halpin to the author, September 1947.

⁴¹Ibid.

awful suffering and read over the roll of the two thousand deaths, I cannot forbear to give expression of the gratitude I feel at my own deliverance.

In the city of tents, twenty-five thousand men were encamped, and of this number ten thousand were brought there sick with fever. At the gate of that city sat the fever spectre taking toll which is nothing less than the lives of our gallant boys in blue. There was no gaiety at Montauk; no music in the company streets, no favors, no banquets, no cheering, no rejoicing. The soldiers knew of the deadly disease which surrounded them and they had no spirit for joyful display. There were seven hospitals, four of which were division hospitals, one general, one detention and one quarantine. Each tent accommodated forty-eight patients, and two nurses were assigned to each tent. The work which they performed is indescribable.

The Sisters of Charity were the first women I met in camp.⁴²

Puerto Rico

Many sick and wounded were under the care of the Spanish Daughters of Charity at San Juan. There they offered their school as a hospital where fifty patients received excellent care.

Ponce has a large charity hospital, the "Tricoche" with two hundred beds under the care and management of the Sisters of Charity. The hospital is a model of cleanliness and comfort. Colonel

⁴²"Military Hospitals", vol. 2.

Greenleaf made arrangements with the city authorities to open the doors of this excellent institution for sick officers. I am sure that everyone who will enjoy the kind treatment and excellent care of the Sisters in this great institution of Charity will have a good word for this ancient and worthy order.⁴³

The number of fever patients at Ponce was increasing each day, so the government petitioned for Daughters. A contingent of ten, headed by Sister Raphael Jones, boarded the *Yucatan* in New York and within a week's time arrived at Puerto Rico. The Red Cross nurses were in full charge of the civil hospital, but by prudent arrangement Sister Raphael, acting with the authorization of the government, had two wards on one side of the courtyard allotted to the Daughters and to the nurses.

During the Christmas holidays, the Daughters, desiring to comfort and give pleasure to sick soldiers, procured some large banana leaves in which they cut out the words "Merry Christmas, Happy New Year". These were tacked around the walls. Knowing that a little extra at meals would add to the holidays, Sister Raphael procured some condensed milk and eggs which she made into a custard. Fortunately, the government had erected an ice plant, so by means of an improvised freezer the men had ice cream.

The feeling between the Daughters and the nurses was so friendly that when Sister Mary Larkin, who had died at camp, was to be buried, the Red Cross volunteered its services in order that the sisters might attend the funeral. Ever mindful that duty to the sick precedes any other service, a sister remained in each ward with the nurses.

⁴³Senn, *Medico-Surgical Aspects*, 157.

Father Lorenzo Roura, C.M., the sub-director of the Spanish Daughters of Charity, wrote the following account, dated November 5, 1898.

During the invasion, change of climate and food occasioned so much sickness among the Americans that in the beginning our poor sisters, although most unremitting in their labors, could not satisfy them. This can easily be imagined. . . They could not inspire them with confidence, and the difference of language prevented a good understanding between patients and nurses.

The American sisters were invited to take charge of their sick. At first, they arranged their ambulances under tents. Later, they were able to transfer their sick to the city hospital. But as their labors were excessive and their privations many, two of the ten who came to attend the sick fell dangerously ill and the day before yesterday at 3:00 p.m., one of the two, Sister Mary Larkin, died.

This death produced a great sensation among all the inhabitants. In the first place, the Americans regretted their countrywoman; we lamented the good and devoted Sister of Charity, our sister in Saint Vincent, whose loss leaves a great void in the service of the poor; the native population grieves over her death because she is the first sister buried at Ponce.

In a letter to Mother Mariana, dated November 1, 1898, Sister Raphael thus expressed her feelings in regard to her life in the service of her country.

Our hospital work is going on nicely. You would be pleased with our wards. The soldier boys come to us often with apparently very constrained feelings in our regard, but it takes only a few days to wear off

these sentiments, and they are at home with us and appreciate everything we do. God bless them! I love them, every one. Mother, my heart is in this work to its fullest appreciation. I wonder if you know, Mother, my father was a soldier? Graduate from West Point in 1824, Lieutenant. So you see, Mother, I am right in my own work.⁴⁴

As the hospital was growing depleted, however, and the Daughters were needed at their various missions, Sister Raphael wrote Colonel Hoff:

Colonel, as you are aware, the greater number of our patients went to the States on the last hospital boat. Those that we have at present are improving rapidly and to all appearances will be able shortly, with a few exceptions, either to return to their regiments or to go to the States on the next hospital boat. Now, Colonel, it seems well to me to draw your attention to the fact that our services are needed in our various missions in the States and this need becomes pressing just as soon as we are no longer needed here.

We were nominated to come to Ponce on the application of the Surgeon General to our Superior, Mother Mariana, for nurses. We came willingly and have been happy in our labor for our soldiers. However, now that we seem to have accomplished the purpose for which we came, it seems but just to consider the needs of the various establishments from which we were drawn. May I suggest, Colonel,

⁴⁴"Military Hospitals", vol. 4.

that if your work is satisfactorily drawing to a close, you kindly notify the Surgeon General of the same and arrange transportation for us all.⁴⁵

The major's reply shows how much he relied on the services of the Daughters of Charity.

I thank you very much for your kind letter and have given your request due consideration. It does not seem to me that we can spare you all at the same time, but by degrees, say two by two, I think perhaps we can let the good sisters go home. You have made us so dependent upon your gentle ministrations to the sick, that we are spoiled and feel as though we cannot get on without you.

The order returning you and Sisters Callahan, Hernan and Haggerty was issued on December 7, 1898. This order directs you to report to the United States by first transport and report to the Surgeon General for annulment of contract.⁴⁶

According to the wishes of Colonel Hoff, the Daughters did not leave Puerto Rico until February 10, 1899, when the last band sailed on the *Berlin* for New York. The remains of Sister Mary Larkin remained in Ponce until February 20, 1900, when the United States government transferred her body to the little cemetery at Saint Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, there to rest near Mother Seton's shrine.

The following poem was written by one of the soldiers for Sister Liguori Kennedy in appreciation for the care given to

⁴⁵"Military Hospitals", vol. 6.

⁴⁶Ibid.

him and other servicemen during the Spanish American War:

For many dear companions we have lost
Who with us had donned the blue,
We have found many faces to frame
and hang on mem'ry's wall,
But the one with the "White Coronette on"
Is the best loved of them all.⁴⁷

"Too much cannot be said in praise of this noble Order, as it has always made itself felt in a modest but most efficient way in all of the great wars, without regard to nationality or creed of the contending armies."⁴⁸

⁴⁷"Military Hospitals", vol. 4.

⁴⁸Senn, *Medico-Surgical Aspects*, 324.