

## **Typhoid Nursing Among the Natives**

FLORENCE GILL

Nurse Raleigh and myself having arrived at the Maori camp were invited to dinner at the native Minister's house, where we partook of cold roast beef, tea, bread and butter and fruit. After dining wisely but not too well, we began to look around for a suitable place to turn into a temporary hospital. We chose a building which had formerly been used as a meeting house, and then proceeded to put our beds up, in which the natives willingly assisted. Then we went round to the several houses to inquire about our patients. We found several in an empty house, which was minus doors, partitions, and windows, which perhaps was just as well for the health of the inmates. The native minister was holding a service in this building, the friends and relations of the sick also being present.

After waiting some considerable time for the service to end, we received our patients and brought them into hospital. From another house we brought three children, and by night we had nine patients.

The natives, though not liking us very much, and seeming to eye us with some suspicion, did not seem to object to our treatment. Nurse Raleigh and I did twelve hours' duty night and day a fortnight about. I was on night duty the first fortnight, and my greatest difficulty for the first few nights was to keep the patients from rolling out of bed, particularly the children, they having been used to sleeping on the floor used to roll out, blankets and all. It was very difficult to make the natives understand they must not sit up or get out of bed. One old man made a trip out one morning to get his pipe to have a smoke. We got him back, and he was none the worse for his adventure. After putting him to bed he said: "Him no good; him very weak." However, it did not prevent him from trying again. We got the doctor's permission for him to smoke, when he said: "Him very good man. Very good!" He finally ran away because we would not warm his jelly.

We were there some three weeks when we were obliged to ask for more help, having by this time eighteen patients. Nurse Herdman was sent out to us, and assisted in the day work, which we found the heaviest.

We had four deaths, one a man who was brought in on a sleigh pulseless, he having had a severe haemorrhage. This patient was fully dressed when brought in, in trousers, vest, coat, collar and tie. He died two days after admission; in

fact, for three days tangis were the order of the day. The unfortunate part of these cases, was that they came in too late for us to render them any assistance.

In the convalescent stage they were most difficult to manage in the way of food: looking with suspicion on the junket, which they called sour milk. The houpa (soup) they liked very much. Kumaras too was a favourite dish, and very pleased we were when they were able to have them, for then we knew they were on the high road to recovery.

I must not forget to mention that at the back of our hospital was another building, of which we converted a part into a kitchen; the natives lent us a stove, and although at times we had to feel our way instead of see on account of the smoke we, however, managed very well for a camp hospital.

We had a large marquee for our own use, but judging by the number of times we moved it, I think a house on wheels would have been more appropriate.

Although we took every precaution against infection: boiled the water and milk, etc., washed any fruit the natives gave us, I ended up by contracting the fever myself, but am now convalescent, and will soon be ready for action again.

*Press.* 22 October 1915 (Papers Past) [19 June 2018]

## **HOSPITAL WORK.**

### **LETTER FROM NURSE GILL.**

Nurse F. Gill, writing to Miss Beryl Selig, of Christchurch, from No. 17 General Hospital, Alexandria, under date September 21st, 1915, says:—

We are in the thick of things now, and have seen about the worst that could happen. We have been very busy ever since we arrived, and are working very short-handed, twenty-one nurses being on the sick list. One, an English nurse, died of dysentery after being a week on duty. She was in Egypt a month altogether. We seem to be standing the climate very well, considering what our climate is like. Five hundred patients arrived when there were only four or five on duty. We have very few wounded in the hospital at present, not more than five hundred, the rest are mostly typhoid, dysentery, and general debility cases.

We have several camps round about us, and at the back of the hospital is a French camp. We often see the men marching and practising their bugle calls, which are most weird and fascinating. They look very gay in their khaki coat, red caps, and trousers. Some of them wear khaki with broad red bands round their waists. They ride grey horses. I know very nearly all the bugle-calls of the British now, especially the call for the orderlies to "Fall in at the double!" No matter what they are doing, they have to drop it and run. He may be the only one on duty with you. We have on an average three sisters, two nursing orderlies, and two general duty orderlies; this number for fifty typhoid patients.

The rain keeps off, but we seem to have plenty of water. I am sorry I cannot say the same about soap. It seems very scarce in this part of the world, and Sunlight seems to be the only thing you can buy, so if you know of anyone who would like to make us a present of anything of any sort, just tell them to send soap, and remember we have on an average about 1500 patients. The Red Cross have been wonderfully good, but they give us fancy soap which lasts no time. The Red Cross have been very good. They find our splints and prepare dressings for us. The patients write on a slip of paper anything they want, and any of the nurses in charge of the ward sign it. They provide them with razors, strops, soap, writing-paper, tooth-brushes, combs, and hairbrushes, also the daily papers.

A surprise packet in the shape of some English Sisters arrived yesterday. About forty were for Egypt, but we only got five. However, they will relieve the pressure somewhat. We have young Clifford, of Christchurch, brother to Mr Clifford, the photographer, in our typhoid ward, but he is very well, and will soon be leaving us. We have a good many New Zealand boys in this hospital, and jolly good sorts they are, too. In the convalescent stage they help us all they can, and we are glad of it, sometimes.

*Press.* 23 September 1937 (Papers Past) [19/06/2018]

**Appreciation of the services of Miss Leila Pike, retiring matron of the Essex Home, and of Miss Florence Gill, who is retiring from the position of matron of the Jubilee Memorial Home, was expressed by members of the North Canterbury Hospital Board yesterday. Miss Pike has been 27 years and Miss Gill 13 years in the service of the board, and Mr H. H. Holland described them as two of the very fine women whom the board had been fortunate to have in its employment.**

*Press.* 23 Sep 1937 (Papers Past) [08/03/2019]

## **MATRON GILL**

### **RETIREMENT NEXT MARCH**

#### **REMARKABLE WAR SERVICE**

To have travelled nine times through the Suez Canal, twice round the Cape of Good Hope, and once through the Panama Canal, all within a year or two —this was the experience of Matron Gill, who, at yesterday's meeting of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, tendered her resignation as matron of Jubilee Home.

Miss Gill took her professional training at the Gisborne Hospital, and after qualifying she was appointed to the staff of the Auckland Hospital, where she gained further experience for 18 months. In 1915 she began her war service, and made several journeys in the hospital ships Marama and Maheno, and then served in Egypt and in England. After the war, she returned to New Zealand, and took a position in Colonel Pickrell's jaw hospital in Dunedin, transferring from there to Timaru, and later to Trentham. In October, 1924, Miss Gill was appointed matron of the Jubilee Home and has held the position ever since. Her resignation will take effect in March next year, and after her retirement she will take up residence in Papanui road.

*Press.* 2 May 1938 (Papers Past) [08/03/2019]

## **MATRON HONOURED**

### **GATHERING AT JUBILEE HOME**

#### **FAREWELL TO MISS F. GILL**

A large number of inmates, staff, and friends gathered at Jubilee Home on Saturday to bid farewell to Matron F. Gill, who has retired after 13 years' service.

Mr L. R. Burgess, in eulogising the services of Miss Gill, referred to the high esteem in which she was held by inmates and staff alike; standing as she did in the relationship of a mother to her family, she had fulfilled the trust of her position with credit to herself and the home.

Mr H. J. Otley, chairman of the Hospital Board, and Mrs W. S. Bean, also spoke of the excellent work done by Miss Gill, and said that the hospital board had been confident that the home could not have had a more competent matron. Mrs Le Page, one of the inmates, expressed the regret of inmates who felt that they were losing one whom they had come to love and respect.

As a tribute, and as a tangible reminder of her years at Jubilee Home, Miss Gill was presented with a fireside chair, an electric iron, and a toaster.

It is Miss Gill's intention to live in Christchurch.

The opportunity was also taken to welcome Miss Staunton, new matron of the home.

Mrs W. Mackay and Mr W. Foster, of the Hospital Board, were among those present.