

A message came to me to prepare for 510 wounded on our side of the Hospital who were arriving from the dreadful affair of the 5th November from Balaklava, in which battle were 1763 wounded and 442 killed, besides 96 officers wounded and 38 killed. I always expected to end my Days as Hospital Matron, but I never expected to be Barrack Mistress. We had but half an hour's notice before they began landing the wounded. Between one and 9 o'clock we had the mattresses stuffed, sewn up, laid down—alas! only upon matting on the floor—the men washed and put to bed, and all their wounds dressed. I wish I had time. I would write you a letter dear to a surgeon's heart. I am as good as a Medical Times! But oh! you Gentlemen of England who sit at Home in all the well-earned satisfaction of your successful cases, can have little Idea from reading the newspapers of the Horror and Misery (in a Military Hospital) of operating upon these dying, exhausted men. A London Hospital is a Garden of Flowers to it.

We have our Quarters in one Tower of the Barrack, and all this fresh influx has been laid down between us and the Main Guard, in two Corridors, with a line of Beds down each side, just room for one person to pass between, and four wards. Yet in the midst of this appalling Horror (we are steeped up to our necks in blood) there is good, and I can truly say, like St. Peter, "It is good for us to be here"—though I doubt whether if St. Peter had been here, he would have said so. As I went my night-rounds among the newly wounded that first night, there was not one murmur, not one groan, the strictest discipline—the most absolute silence and quiet prevailed—only the steps of the Sentry—and I heard one man say, "I was dreaming of my friends at Home," and another said, "I was thinking of them." These poor fellows bear pain and mutilation with an unshrinking heroism which is really superhuman, and die, or are cut up without a complaint.

The wounded are now lying up to our very door, and we are landing 540 more from the Andes. I take rank in the Army as Brigadier General, because 40 British females, whom I have with me, are more difficult to manage than 4000 men. Let no lady come out here who is not used to fatigue and privation.... Every ten minutes an Orderly runs, and we have to go and cram lint into the wound till a Surgeon can be sent for, and stop the Bleeding as well as we can. In all our corridor, I think we have not an average of three Limbs per man. And there are two Ships more "loading" at the Crimea with wounded—(this is our Phraseology). Then come the operations, and a melancholy, not an encouraging List is this. They are all performed in the wards—no time to move them; one poor fellow exhausted with hæmorrhage, has his leg amputated as a last hope, and dies ten minutes after the Surgeon has left him. Almost before the breath has left his body it is sewn up in its blanket, and carried away and buried the same day. We have no room for Corpses in the Wards. The Surgeons pass on to the next, an excision of the shoulder-joint, beautifully performed and going on well. Ball lodged just in the head of the joint and fracture starred all round. The next poor fellow has two Stumps for arms, and the next has lost an arm and a leg. As for the Balls they go in where they like and come out where they like and do as much harm as they can in passing.