

MOTHER BICKERDYKE.

By PHYLLIS BROWNE.



THERE are few women and girls now living who have not felt their hearts burn within them as they have read of the heroic deeds of Sister Dora Pattison, the noble-hearted, self-sacrificing hospital nurse. The memory of this lady is warmly cherished by her countrymen, one of whom has said of her that she was the equal of any of the saints of old, and that if she had lived and worked as the saints did in the ages of Faith, her tomb would already have become a sacred shrine to which troops of pious pilgrims would have crowded to kneel and pray. This is high praise, but it is deserved.

The great American War, that war which virtually put an end to slavery, produced a nurse who was very much like Sister Dora, not only in her ability, her bravery, and her strength of will, but also in her wit, her determination, her tenderness, and her devotion to duty. The name of this remarkable woman was Mrs. Mary Bickerdyke—Mother Bickerdyke as she was usually called among the soldiers. Mrs. Bickerdyke is not celebrated in England as she is in America. The story of her work has, however, been recently given to her countrymen and countrywomen by one of her friends and comrades, Mrs. Mary Livermore, in a book called "My Story of the War," a most interesting one, not published in England. It is a woman's narrative of four years' personal experience as nurse in the Union Army, in hospitals, in camp, and at the front. As might have been expected, one who had this experience made the acquaintance of many nurses of strong and original character, and Mrs. Livermore, the authoress, makes mention in her narrative of notable women not a few. But amongst them all Mother Bickerdyke stands pre-eminent, and it is from Mrs. Livermore's narrative that the following details have been compiled.

Before, however, we can understand Mrs. Bickerdyke's work we have to remember that when war was first declared between the Northern and Southern States, neither the American people nor the American Government fully realised what civil war was. The Northerners were full of enthusiasm and public spirit, and they expected to carry everything before them; but they did not in the least understand the horror and suffering, to say nothing of the actual work, which would have to be gone through before the painful

business was finished. The consequence was that the sanitary arrangements of the Government were not equal to the demands made upon them, and they soon broke down. The wounded soldiers did not receive the attention and the care which they required, and thus their misery and pain were greatly increased.

The same thing happened in the British Army at the beginning of the Crimean War. Out of 24,000 troops sent to the Crimea, 18,000 died in less than nine months; a mortality, it has been said, never equalled since the hosts of Sennacherib fell in a single night. The soldiers thus lost were not killed by the enemy; they died from lack of care, proper sanitary regulations, and the diet necessary for the sick. It was not until Florence Nightingale and her band of ninety-two nurses arrived at the seat of war, that order took the place of confusion, and that the high rate of mortality was reduced.

Things were never as bad with the American army as they had been with the British army; but there was a threatening of similar evils, and in the one case as in the other, a number of women stepped to the rescue. Organizations of women for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers were speedily formed throughout the Northern States, and they raised money, sent hospital supplies to the army, and put nurses into the hospitals who had been trained for the work, and who, besides having an aptitude for the care of the sick, were attracted to it by large humanity and patriotic zeal. There were hundreds of women who thus devoted themselves to the care of the sick and wounded during a part or the whole of the years of the war, and some of them did extraordinary service. Mrs. Livermore, in her book, has made special mention of several of them. Amongst them all, however, none was more remarkable than "Mother Bickerdyke," and English girls are sure to be interested in the representation of this wonderful woman, though here her story must be told much less elaborately than Mrs. Livermore tells it in her book.

Mrs. Mary Bickerdyke was born in Ohio, July 19th, 1817. She came of Revolutionary ancestors, and was never happier than when recounting fragments of her grandfather's history, when he served under Washington. When about twenty-five years old, Mary married a widower with five children, by whom she was beloved as if she was their own mother, and between whom and her own two sons she never made any difference. The marriage was a happy one, although it used to be thought that the immense energy and tireless industry of the busy wife proved sometimes annoying to the easy-going husband. Mr. Bickerdyke's death occurred about two years before the breaking out of the war, and his widow was more than once heard to tell married men, in a sort of warning way and very seriously, that she really believed her husband might have lived twenty years longer if he had not worn himself into the grave trying to "boss" her. "He wanted me to do everything in his way," she would say, "and just as he did; but his way was too slow; I couldn't stand it."

When the war broke out, Mrs. Bickerdyke was living in Galesburg, Illinois, and at the suggestion of the ladies of the town, who had banded themselves together to do something for their country, she was sent to the camp and regimental hospital in Cairo, to look after

the sick soldiers. At the time of her arrival there was little order, system, or discipline anywhere, but she immediately set vigorously to work to do what ought to be done, and in a very short time she succeeded in bringing about a great change for the better in the condition of the sick. The influence of her energetic, resolute, and systematic spirit was felt everywhere, and the people of Cairo gladly aided her in her voluntary and unpaid labours. A room was hired for her, and a cooking stove put up for her especial use. She improvised a sick-diet kitchen, and carried thence to the sick in the hospitals the food she had prepared for them. In a very short time she was made matron of the hospitals, and proved herself so trustworthy and capable, that almost all the hospital supplies sent from the local aid societies were given into her care, and she became quite famous for her economical use of them. The hospital boats at that time were but poorly equipped for the sad work of transporting the wounded from the field of battle to the hospital, but Mrs. Bickerdyke always used to put on board the boat with which she was connected, articles likely to be wanted, and it used to be said that there was hardly a want expressed for which she could not furnish the means of relief.

On the way to the battlefield, also, she systematised matters perfectly. The beds were ready for the occupants; tea, coffee, soup, gruel, milk punch, and ice water were prepared in large quantities under her supervision, and sometimes by her own hand. When the wounded were brought on board mangled almost out of human shape, chilled with the intense cold in which some had lain for hours, faint with loss of blood, physical agony, and lack of nourishment, the boat was all in readiness for them. "I never saw anybody like her," said a volunteer surgeon, who came on the boat with her. "There was really nothing for us surgeons to do but dress wounds and administer medicines. She drew out clean shirts or drawers from some corner, whenever they were needed. Incessant cries of 'Mother! mother!' rang through the boat in every note of beseeching and anguish. And to every man she turned with tenderness as if he were indeed her son. To every surgeon who was superior she held herself subordinate, and was as good at obeying as at commanding." And yet at that time she held no position whatever, and was receiving no compensation for her services.

After a battle, when the wounded had all been removed to the hospital, the battlefield was of course abandoned. On one occasion the relief parties did not discontinue their work until midnight, and after they had left, an officer looking from his tent observed a faint light flitting hither and thither over the field. He puzzled over it for some time, and then sent his servant to see what it was. It was Mother Bickerdyke with a lantern still groping among the dead. Stooping down and turning their cold faces towards her, she scrutinised them searchingly, uneasy lest some might be left to die uncared for. She could not rest while she thought any were overlooked who were yet living.

After the wounded of this particular battle were cared for, Mrs. Bickerdyke left the hospitals, and went back into the army, where great sickness prevailed among the troops. While busy here another battle occurred nine miles distant. There had been little provision made for the terrible needs of the soldiers in advance of the conflict, and utter destitution and incredible suffering prevailed. Three

days after the fight, however, and some days in advance of the Government boats, boats arrived laden with every species of relief, condensed food, stimulants, clothing, bedding, medicine, chloroform, surgical instruments, and carefully selected volunteer nurses and surgeons. With them was Mother Bickerdyke, who set to work instantly to do what was necessary, and who carried system, order, and relief wherever she went. One of the surgeons went to the rear with a wounded man, and found her busy, wrapped in the grey overcoat of a rebel officer, for she had given her blanket-shawl to some poor fellow who needed it. She was wearing, also, a soft slouch hat, having lost her usual "Shaker" bonnet. Her kettles had been set up, the fire kindled underneath, and she was dispensing hot soup, tea, and other refreshments to the shivering, fainting, wounded men.

"Where did you get those articles?" inquired the surgeon, "and under whose authority are you at work?"

Mother Bickerdyke was so completely absorbed in her work of compassion that she paid no heed to these questions, indeed, she did not hear them. Watching her with admiration for her skill, administrative ability, and intelligence, for she not only fed the wounded men, but temporarily dressed their wounds in some cases, the surgeon approached her again.

"Madam, you seem to combine in yourself a sick-diet kitchen and a medical staff. May I inquire under whose authority you are working?"

Without pausing in her work, she answered him—

"I have received my authority from the Lord God Almighty; have you anything that ranks higher than that?"

Notwithstanding her desire to bow before lawful authorities, Mother Bickerdyke was for a time at variance with one of the medical staff of the hospital. One of the medical directors with whom she came in contact was a young man belonging to the regular army, able, industrious, skilful, and punctilious, who wished Mrs. Bickerdyke never to go beyond him or outside him for assistance or authority. Moreover, he was a Catholic, and inclined to give the preference to "Sisters of Mercy" as nurses, and he was not backward in publicly expressing his preference. He did not approve of Mrs. Bickerdyke's possessing so much power, nor, if the truth must be told, of Mrs. Bickerdyke herself. He could not see any excellence in a woman who worked with her own hands, who held no social position, who was as indifferent to the Queen's English as to his red tape, and who did what she wished, when and as she wished, without consulting him.

Mrs. Bickerdyke cared little what he said or thought if he did not meddle with her. But one day there was a disagreement between the two which threatened to become very serious. The doctor was very angry and threatened all sorts of dreadful things, winding up by saying that he would not have Mrs. Bickerdyke in the hospital, but would send her home before she was a week older.

"But I shan't go, doctor!" she answered. "I've come down here to stay, and I mean to stay until this thing is played out. I've enlisted for the war as the boys have, and they want me and need me, and can't get on without me, and so I shall stay, doctor, and you'll have to make up your mind to get along with me the best way you can. It's of no use for you to try to tie me up with your red tape. There's too much to be done down here to stop for that. Nor is there any sense in your getting mad because I don't play second fiddle to you, for I tell you I haven't got time for it. And, doctor, I guess you hadn't better get into a row with me, for whenever anybody

does, one of us two always goes to the wall, and 'tain't never me."

The doctor had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and Mother Bickerdyke's novel method of pacification amused him. He was really a very superior officer, and had the good sense to appreciate blunt Mother Bickerdyke's excellences. When mutual friends entered on the work of pacification they were successful, and from being at disagreement, the two finally came to a perfect understanding, and by-and-by became the best of friends.

During the war it was more difficult to supply the hospitals with milk and eggs than with any other necessities. With the supplies furnished by Government, the tea, coffee, sugar, flour, meat, and other articles, which were usually of good quality, this clever woman could work wonders in the culinary line, even when there was a lack of sanitary stores, if she could only have an abundant supply of milk and eggs. (She would sometimes say to the soldiers, "When the war is over, I shall publish a starvation cooking book, containing recipes for making delicious dishes out of nothing," and, indeed, if anyone could prepare such a manual Mother Bickerdyke was the person.) But supplies of milk and eggs were not easy to get. They could not be sent from the North, and they could not be purchased in sufficiently large quantities to supply the enormous demand. During one period, the hospital to which Mrs. Bickerdyke was attached was located at Memphis, in the enemy's country, and there the prices were exorbitant beyond belief. Mother Bickerdyke bore them for a time, and then she hit upon a plan to remedy these difficulties. When the medical director came into her hospital one morning on a tour of inspection, she accosted him thus—

"Dr.—do you know we are paying fifty cents for every quart of milk we use? And do you know it's such poor stuff—two-thirds chalk and water—that if you should pour it into the trough of a respectable pig at home, he would turn up his nose and run off squealing in disgust?"

"Well, what can we do about it?" asked the doctor.

"If you'll give me thirty days' furlough, I'll go home and get all the milk and eggs that these hospitals can use."

"Get milk and eggs! Why you could not bring them down here, if the north would give up all it has. A barrel of eggs would spoil this warm weather before it could reach us; and how on earth could you bring milk?"

"But I'll bring you down the milk and egg producers. I'll get cows and hens, and we'll have milk and eggs of our own. The folks at home, doctor, will give us all the hens and cows we need for these hospitals, and jump at the chance to do it."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" said the doctor, "you would be laughed at from one end of the country to the other if you should go on so wild an errand."

"Who cares for that?" said the adventurous nurse. "Give me thirty days' furlough, and let me try."

Before her thirty days' leave of absence was ended, Mother Bickerdyke was on the return route to her hospital, forming a part of a *bizarre* procession of over one hundred cows and one thousand hens, strung all along the road. She entered the city of her destination in triumph, amid immense lowing, and crowing, and cackling; and she informed the astonished spectators that "these were loyal cows and hens, none of your miserable trash that give chalk and water for milk, and lay loud-smelling eggs."

Her exploits in supplying the hospital with milk and eggs, as well as the grand accounts of her famous nursing, which had been brought home by furloughed soldiers, gave

Mrs. Bickerdyke an enviable notoriety. Everybody wanted to see the good woman, and to see her personally, or assist her in her work. On one occasion she went to Chicago on a brief visit, and her arrival was announced in the papers, and she was overwhelmed with attentions, which she put aside with the utmost indifference. Invitations to visit towns, cities, and societies poured in upon her like a flood. Receptions were tendered her; ladies offered to make parties for her, and invitations to lunch came by dozens. But she declined all with the stereotyped rebuke that, "The country had a big war on its hands, and that this was no time for visiting or frolicking." On a second visit which she made to the north, similar efforts were made to honour her; but she refused to go anywhere to be lionised unless someone was with her, "to bear the brunt of the nonsense," as she termed it. When she was in Milwaukee the Chamber of Commerce had made an appropriation for the hospitals, and an address was made to her by the President of the Board of Trade, who thanked her for her patriotic labours. In reply she said:—

"I am much obliged to you, gentlemen, for the kind things you have said. I haven't done much, no more than I ought, neither have you. I am glad you are going to give this money to the poor fellows in the hospitals, for it's no more than you ought to do, and it isn't half as much as the soldiers in the hospitals have given for you. Suppose, gentlemen, you had got to give to-night one thousand dollars or your right leg, would it take long to decide which to surrender? Two thousand dollars or your right arm; five thousand dollars or both your eyes; all that you are worth or your life? But I have eighteen hundred soldiers in the hospital who have given one arm and one leg, and some have both; and yet they don't seem to think they have done a great deal for their country. And the graveyard behind the hospital, and the battlefield a little further off, contains the bodies of thousands who have freely given their lives. Oh, gentlemen, don't let us be telling of what we have given, and what we have done! We have done nothing and given nothing in comparison with them." It would not be easy to match the pathos of eloquence of this untutored speech.

Mother Bickerdyke was still living when we last heard of her. She is a woman of medium height, with brown hair, now well sprinkled with white, blue eyes, and a mouth of great sweetness and firmness. When young, she must have possessed considerable beauty, for after sixty years' incredible wear and tear, she was still very comely. Always cheerful, never discouraged, brave, indomitable, witty, shrewd, versatile, clear-headed, unique, she only needed early advantages to make her the equal of Sister Dora. During the war she was the darling of the soldiers, and for them she had unbounded tenderness, and developed almost limitless resources of help and comfort. To the soldiers she was strength and sweetness, and for them she exercised sound, practical sense, a rare intelligence that made her a power in the hospital or on the field. When she appeared, every soldier used to salute her, and to the entire army of the west she was emphatically Mother Bickerdyke. An officer said one day, pointing to her, "That homely figure, clad in calico, wrapped in a shawl, and surrounded with a 'Shaker' bonnet, is more to this army than the Madonna is to the Catholic." Thousands of soldiers are indebted to her for care, nursing, tenderness, and help, in the direst hours of their lives. If she were a queen she could not be more royally welcomed than she is when she appears amongst them. Mrs. Livermore gives an account of a Convention which was held in Kansas, which Mother Bickerdyke attended as an invited guest. No

sooner did she enter the hall than the veterans all pressed towards her; grey-haired and grey-bearded men took her in their arms and kissed her. Others wept over her; while men on crutches, and men with empty coat-sleeves stood outside the crowd with shiny eyes, waiting their turn to greet their benefactress. "Oh, mother! your brown hair has grown white, but I should know ye by your speech if I met ye in Africa," said one.

"I should know her by the tender eyes and the kind mouth," said another.

They noted her increasing feebleness, her crippled hands, her dimming eyes, and said to each other, "It isn't the result of old age; it is what she did for us during the war."

Only that Mother Bickerdyke resolutely forbids it, the men would surround her with luxury. But she declares "they have enough

to do to provide for themselves and their families, and they shall not be weighted with the care of me." Congress has, however, given her a small pension, and she has a position in the U.S. Mint. She is very happy, for she looks back on a life well spent. Although she is a member of a Congregational church, yet in church matters, as in war times, she breaks through regulations, and goes where she pleases, communing now with one sect, now with another, "just as she happens to light on 'em," to quote her own language. She gave her life to the rank and file of the United States Army, and her heroic deeds are chronicled in the hearts of the men.

One more characteristic anecdote of her may be told in conclusion. Not many months ago Mother Bickerdyke arrived at Mrs. Livermore's house in Massachusetts at the close of a dis-

mally rainy day. She was wet and exhausted, and it was found that she had spent the day in Boston, searching for an old soldier from Illinois, who had served out three terms in the house of correction for drunkenness during the last ten years. Mrs. Livermore remonstrated with her.

"My dear friend," said she, "why do you, at the age of seventy-two, waste yourself on such a worthless creature?"

Turning, with a flash of her blue eyes, she answered—

"Mary Livermore, I have a commission from the Lord God Almighty to do all I can for every miserable creature who comes in my way."

In the course of her life thousands of miserable creatures have had reason to be thankful that Mary Bickerdyke recognised this commission.



THE DEAF OLD LADY.

When the aunt of Constable, the famous landscape painter, was dying, the deaf old lady said—

"Anne, if I should be spared to be taken away, I hope my nephew will get the doctor to open my head and see if anything can be done for my hearing."

THE FAIR STUDENT.

When Madame de Dumas was learning English, Walpole addressed to her the following stanza of courtly compliment:—

"Though British accents your attention fire,
You cannot learn so fast as we admire,
Scholars like you but slowly can improve,
For who would teach you but the verb,
'I love.'"

COUNTING THE STITCHES.

In the olden time, when sewing machines were not even dreamt of, to make even a single shirt was a laborious undertaking. What man in those days ever thought of the number of stitches in a shirt without trembling lest a general mutiny amongst women might leave him "without a shirt to his back."

In 1825, a lady sent to Hone's "Every Day Book" a calculation, "furnished me," she says, "by a maiden aunt, of the number of stitches in a plain shirt she made for her grandfather." Here it is:—

Stitching the collar, four rows ..	3,000
Sewing the ends	500
Button-holes and sewing on buttons	150
Sewing on the collar and gather-	
ing the neck	1,204
Stitching the wristbands	1,228
Sewing the ends	68
Button-holes	148
Hemming the slits	264
Gathering the sleeves	840
Setting on wristbands	1,468
Stitching shoulder-straps, three	
rows each	1,880
Hemming the neck	390
Sewing the sleeves	2,554
Setting in sleeves and gussets ..	3,050
Taping the sleeves	1,526
Sewing the seams	841
Setting side gussets	424
Hemming the bottom	1,104

Total number of stitches .. 20,646

MEETING THE LADIES.

A Frenchman who was paying a visit in this country, and was about to be introduced to the family, said—

"Ah, ze ladies! zen I vould before, if you please, vish to purify mine hands and to sweep mine hair."

NOT EXACTLY.

"Have you been much at sea?"

"Why, no, *not exactly*; but my brother married an admiral's daughter."

"Were you ever abroad?"

"No, *not exactly*; but my mother's maiden name was 'French.'"

GENTLENESS IN ARGUMENT.

Mild, light, and by degrees, should be the plan

To cure the dark and erring mind;
But who would rush at a benighted man,
And give him two black eyes for being blind.

—Hood.

LACE FOR THE KING.

William III., in spite of his grim, phlegmatic character, had a genuine Dutch taste for lace. His bills for that article in 1695 reached the large sum of £2,459 19s.

Among the more astonishing items we have:—

117 yards of scissæ teniæ cutwork, for trimming twelve pocket handkerchiefs, £485 14s. 3d., and

78 yards for twenty-four cravats at £8 10s., £663.

Lace expended for six new razor cloths amounted to £270, and £499 10s. worth of lace was bestowed on twenty-four new night shirts.

The Queen Mary approached, but did not reach the King in lace expenditure; her lace bill for 1694 amounted to £1,918.

THE HISTORY OF VELVET.—In all probability the art of velvet-weaving originated in the far East; and it was not till about the beginning of the 14th century that we find any mention of the fabric. Fustian, however, which differs from velvet only in material, is spoken of in English ecclesiastical inventories as early as the beginning of the 13th century.

THE LAST WORD.

"I should like to know," said Mr. Rambo, testily, when the conversation had begun to wax warm, "why it is that a woman always wants to have the last word."

"She doesn't," replied Mrs. Rambo; "it's a slander."

"My dear, it is certainly the truth. You know you always—"

"Absolom, you know better. I don't."

"I am sure—"

"No you're not. It isn't so."

"Why, my dear, can't you see—"

"No, I can't! And I think—boo—hoo—you are—are just as—as mean as you can be."

"Well, dear, I'll take it back. You don't always want the last word."

"Of course I don't. I don't see what you wanted to say so for."

"Well, I won't say it any more."

"Because you know it isn't true—"

"I—"

"As well as I do."

"I—"

"You want it yourself."

"I—"

"And you know it."

"You may be right, my dear," said Mr. Rambo, putting on his hat and going out.

"I know I'm right," rejoined Mrs. Rambo, calling after him.