LETTERS OF A CIVIL WAR NURSE: CORNELIA HANCOCK

By: Kalli, Megan, and Collin
DEAR SISTER

Gettysburg--July 8th, 1863.

MY DEAR SISTER

WE have been two days on the field; go out about eight and come in about six--go in ambulances or army buggies. The surgeons of the Second Corps had one put at our disposal. I feel assured I shall never feel horrified at anything that may happen to me hereafter. There is a great want of surgeons here; there are hundreds of brave fellows, who have not had their wounds dressed since the battle.

Brave is not the word; more, more Christian fortitude never was witnessed than they exhibit, always say--"Help my neighbor first he is worse." The Second Corps did the heaviest fighting, and, of course, all who were badly wounded, were in the thickest of the fight, and, therefore, we deal with the very best class of the men--that is the bravest. My name is particularly grateful to them because it is Hancock. General Hancock is very popular with his men. The reason why they suffer more in this battle is because our army is victorious and marching on after Lee, leaving the wounded for citizens and a very few surgeons. The citizens are stripped of everything they have, so you must see the exhausting state of affairs. The Second Army Corps alone had two thousand men wounded, this I had from the Surgeon's headquarters. I cannot write more. There is no mail that comes in, we send letters out; I believe the Government has possession of the road. I hope you will write. It would be very pleasant to have letters to read in the evening, for I am so tired I cannot write them. Get the Penn Relief to send clothing here; there are many men without anything but a shirt lying in poor shelter tents, calling on God to take them from this world of suffering; in fact, the air is rent with petitions to deliver them from their sufferings.

C. HANCOCK
DEAR SISTER

- The author of Dear Sister was Cornelia Hancock
- The intended audience is Cornelia's sister
- In the letter there are a number of wounded people and citizens of Gettysburg had everything they owned taken from them
- The letter was written July 8, 1863
- There really was no bias in the letter because the letter did not share many opinions, it was more based on what was happening
- The letter says “help my neighbor—he is worse.” Why do you think someone in a hospital would tell their aid to help somebody else?
- Why do you think the people would suffer more because their army is victorious?
MY DEAR MOTHER

IT is with trouble that I can find time and quiet enough to write to anyone. I have been sick but one day since I have been here, and then I went into a tent and was waited upon like a princess. I like to be here very much, am perfectly used to the suffering and the work just suits me; it is more superintending than real work, still the work is constant. I like being in the open air, sleep well and eat well. The rumors about camp are that this hospital is to be moved down to Gettysburg, I hope it is not so but I expect it is. The field hospital is a number of tents and nothing more; it is in first rate order now, and I am sorry it has to be moved. All the officers will be changed I suppose. The men are very polite to me and I get on remarkably well, but quiet is impossible to obtain at camp.

I have succeeded in getting a washerwoman today which is a great institution here indeed. Old sheets and pads of every description are wanted in my hospital. Food we are scarce of sometimes but it is generally plenty.

I received, a few days ago, a Silver Medal worth twenty dollars. The inscription on one side is "Miss Cornelia Hancock, presented by the wounded soldiers 3rd Division 2nd Army Corps." On the other side is "Testimonial of regard for ministrations of mercy to the wounded soldiers at Gettysburg, Pa.—July 1863."
DEAR MOTHER

- The author of Dear Mother was Cornelia Hancock
- The intended audience was Cornelia’s Mother
- In the letter, Cornelia is very ill, but she actually likes having people wait on her. She also likes how quiet it is there, but there are rumors being spread that the hospital will be moved to Gettysburg.
- The letter was written sometime in July, 1863
- There is a small bit of bias in the letter because there are rumors being spread about the hospital
- In the letter Cornelia says the suffering suits her. Do you think she is really suffering as she is being waited on like a princess?
- How do you think the rumors about the hospital being moved started?
Direct boxes--E. W. Farnham, care of Dr. Homer, Gettysburg, Penna. for Second Corps Hospital. Do not neglect this; clothing is shockingly needed. We fare pretty well for delicacies sent up by men from Baltimore.

If you direct your letters Miss Hancock, Second Corps, Third Division Hospital, do not scruple to put the Miss to it, and leave out Cornelia, as I am known only by that cognomen. I do not know when I shall go home--it will be according to how long this hospital stays here and whether another battle comes soon. I can go right in an ambulance without being any expense to myself. The Christian Committee support us and when they get tired the Sanitary is on hand. Uncle Sam is very rich, but very slow, and if it was not for the Sanitary, much suffering would ensue. We give the men toast

and eggs for breakfast, beef tea at ten o’clock, ham and bread for dinner, and jelly and bread for supper. Dried rusk would be nice if they were only here. Old sheets we would give much for. Bandages are plenty but sheets very scarce. We have plenty of woolen blankets now, in fact the hospital is well supplied, but for about five days after the battle, the men had no blankets nor scarce any shelter.

It took nearly five days for some three hundred surgeons to perform the amputations that occurred here, during which time the rebels lay in a dying condition without their wounds being dressed or scarcely any food. If the rebels did not get severely punished for this battle, then I am no judge. We have but one rebel in our camp now; he says he never fired his gun if he could help it, and, therefore, we treat him first rate. One man died this morning. I fixed him up as nicely as the place will allow; he will be buried this afternoon. We are becoming somewhat civilized here now and the men are cared for well.

On reading the news of the copperhead performance, in a tent where eight men lay with nothing but stumps (they call a leg cut off above the knee a "stump") they said if they held on a little longer they would form a stump brigade and go and fight them. We have some plucky boys in the hospital, but they suffer awfully. One had his leg cut off yesterday, and some of the ladies, newcomers, were up to see him. I told them if they had seen as many as I had they would not go far to see the sight again. I could stand by and see a man’s head taken off I believe--you get so used to it here. I should be perfectly contented if I could receive my letters. I have the cooking all on my mind pretty much. I have torn almost all my clothes off of me, and Uncle Sam has given me a new suit. William says I am very popular here as I am such a contrast to some of the office seeking women who swarm around hospitals. I am black as an Indian and dirty as a pig and as well as I ever was in my life--have a nice bunk and tent about twelve feet square. I have a bed that is made of four crotch sticks and some sticks laid across and pine boughs laid on that with blankets on top. It is equal to any mattress ever made. The tent is open at night and sometimes I have laid in the damp all night long, and got up all right in the morning.
The suffering we get used to and the nurses and doctors, stewards, etc., are very jolly and sometimes we have a good time. It is very pleasant weather now. There is all in getting to do what you want to do and I am doing that.

The First Minnesota Regiment bears the first honors here for loss in the late battle. The Colonel was wounded--Lieutenant Colonel, Major, and Adjutant. They had four captains killed outright and when they came out of battle, the command devolved on the First Lieutenant. Three hundred and eighty-four men went into battle, one hundred and eighty were wounded and fifty-four killed. The Colonel I know well; he is a very fine man. He has three bullets in him; has had two taken out by Dr. Child, the other he got in at Antietam and it is there yet. I do hope he will recover. Most of the men are from New York here now; they are very intelligent and talk good politics. McClellan is their man mostly. Meade they think sympathizes with McClellan and therefore they like him. Hooker is at a very low ebb except as they think he fed them well--a circumstance that soldiers make great account of. Such feeders you never saw.

Pads are terribly needed here. Bandages and lint are plenty. I would like to see seven barrels of dried rusk here. I do not know the day of the week or anything else. Business is slackening a little though--order is beginning to reign in the hospital and soon things will be right. One poor fellow is hollowing fearfully now while his wounds are being dressed.

There is no more impropriety in a young person being here provided they are sensible than a sexagenarian. Most polite and obliging are all the soldiers to me.

It is a very good place to meet celebrities; they come here from all parts of the United States to see their wounded. Senator Wilson, Mr. Washburn, and one of the Minnesota Senators have been here. I get beef tenderloin for dinner.--Ladies who work are favored but the dress-up palavers are passed by on the other side. I tell you I have lost my memory almost entirely, but it is gradually returning. Dr. Child has done very good service here. All is well with me; we do not know much war news, but I know I am doing all I can, so I do not concern further. Kill the copperheads. Write everything, however trifling, it is all interest here.

From thy affectionate
The author is E. W. Farmham

The intended audience is Cornelia Hancock

When the letter was written, there were many soldiers injured in the hospital and it mentioned hundreds of surgeons performing amputations

There is no real bias in the letter because although the letter was written from one point of view and didn‘t mention others very often, it was more of an update than a place to share opinions

The letter quotes “. I do not know the day of the week or anything else.” Why do you think in their time the date didn’t matter, but in ours, it does?

The letter quotes “I could stand by and see a man’s head taken off I believe--you get so used to it here.” Do you think they could actually stand by and watch someone’s head blown off and show no grief?
CONCLUSION

I hope you enjoyed this presentation!