

Nurses in poetry

The following poems were written by soldiers about their nurses:

A prayer of thanks

The night is dark and dank and drear,
I toss upon my fevered bed
And softly comes on soundless feet
An earthly angel to my head;
And over my burning brow her hand
So soft and cool in sweet caress,
A healing touch that soothes my pain
With loving care and tenderness.
God bless "The Rose of No Man's Land",
Who guides me through my night of pain,
And keep her safe throughout the storm.

Anonymous. AWM PR 00526

Sister Christine Erica Ström AANS, 1917.
AWM H18820



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Smilin' thru'

Though fate has been unkind to us with sickness and in pain,
It takes the kindness of the nurse to bring us health again;
Her smiling face so cheerful, with radiance aglow,
I'll praise her work unending wherever I may go.
No words that I can utter with justice half express
The gratitude I'll always feel, the depths you cannot guess.
The kindness and devotion bestowed in Mercy's cause,
Deserves the highest praise of all – a round of loud applause!
No doubt they have their troubles (who hasn't some these days?)
But they never show they have them, dispensing kindness many ways.
There's one just here as I'm writing, who is always bright and jolly,
And the first prize I would surely give to one whose name is Polly.
So Australia is indebted, and the soldier thankful too,
To the sisters and the nurses, with their motto *Smilin' thru'*.
Farewell I'll soon be leaving, you've done so much for me,
For others in their illness and Australia generally.

A.M. McDermott, AWM PR 88019

Activities:

1) How do the soldiers describe their nurses? What qualities do the soldiers believe they have?

2) Why would the nurses have meant so much to the soldiers?

Could you imagine a soldier writing a poem like this today? Would they use the same language, rhyme and subject? Why or why not?