

Transport of Wounded in War

One of the great features of the present war is the many new methods of conveying the wounded from the battle fields to the clearing hospitals and from these on to the base hospitals, where they finally stay until convalescent.

First come the motor ambulances, which go to the battlefields accompanied by a doctor to pick up the wounded. These are fitted very comfortably, and usually accommodate about six lying-down cases and several standing or sitting. These very rapidly and fairly comfortably convey the wounded to the first dressing station, and sometimes even go out from the base hospitals. Sometimes nurses accompany the doctors on these errands, and there is keen competition for the honour of going. Some of these have an arrangement for carrying hot soup and other food which more than anything help to combat the shock of the wounds.

Hospital trains of which there are about forty, equipped with dual brakes to travel over any railway in Britain have been supplied from the large railway companies of Great Britain. They are in use for the conveyance of men from the landing places to the various hospitals. They are provided with treatment rooms, fitted with steam cooking arrangements, lavatories, beds, hot and cold water, and all that is required for the officers and men during the journey from the coast, as well as day and sleeping accommodation for doctors, nurses, and general staff.

Besides these trains there are many trains on the Continent near the fighting area, which run between the clearing and the base hospitals. Nurses give very interesting accounts of the duty on these trains. We reprint one from the "Nursing Times" of January 9th. :

Ambulance Train No. 11,
Boulogne.

We have had a very busy time lately, here, there, and everywhere, bringing men down from the Front to the different base hospitals. No time to collect our Christmas letters which are still waiting for us at Rouen! I cannot tell you very much about our work because of the Censor, but this week I send you an account of the train. I hope to send you a photo shortly, but as it is nearly 800 feet long it is a difficult subject for a camera! It consists of two kitchens, dispensary, stores, doctors' coach, and dining saloon, sisters' and matron's coach, orderlies' barrack room, ten wards, each of twenty-two beds, two coaches to

hold sixty-five sitting-up cases, etc. Each sister is responsible for her own ward with two St. John Ambulance orderlies under her; she can requisition all she needs for each journey from stores and dispensary. The one drawback is the want of communication between the coaches, so that when we are en route with bad cases we have an anxious time, as the only way to get the doctor is to send an orderly flying for him anywhere the train may happen to stop. The doctors are very good in coming, even if it means walking along the foot-board, a somewhat perilous affair on a French train! The cases are most interesting; many of the men come straight from the trenches, and are so grateful and uncomplaining. I had two nice Scotch boys last week; both had been in the trenches the day before; one is sixteen and one seventeen, and they went by the name of "The Babes in the Wood!"

Our coach is a first-class carriage with corridor; each sister has half a carriage, which she arranges according to her own taste. Our equipment consists of a mattress, pillows, four grey rugs, pillow cases, towels, and an enamel jug and basin, and very comfortable we find our beds after a good day's work in the wards. In daytime rugs are folded, pillows put into covers of various colours, and basin hidden away, so we have quite a nice little sitting-room. Great ingenuity is shown in the many devices to disguise one's sponge, brush and comb bag, and to make them ornamental. One sister is very patriotic, her room gay with Turkey twill and British flags, while the other side of the compartment favours the Navy. Another is faithful to Auld Ireland, while her companion is decked in Belgian colours. One of our many interesting journeys was on Christmas Eve; we started at 3 a.m., and arrived at our destination about 9. We could hear the guns plainly, and saw many aeroplanes. At one time we heard a curious crackling sound, which an officer told us was artillery firing at a Taube of the enemy. We took over 300 cases on board, some very serious cases of bullet wounds, shrapnel, and frostbites; all were attended to and dressed en route, and made as comfortable as possible. One poor man with rheumatic fever and a temperature of 104 degrees had slept on straw for days. Of course every possible care is taken of the ill and wounded. Meals on board are a real luxury to Tommy after the trenches; soup, milk, eggs, fruit, and good bread and butter are a pleasant change from bully beef and biscuits.

We arrived at the base again about 10 p.m., and having seen all our patients carefully moved on stretchers to their respective hospitals, put the wards in order again, and ready for the next journey; we left the orderlies to clean up, a much-needed process, and went to bed, starting on our next journey at 1.30 a.m.

There are also the hospital yachts of which Sister Penley writes from the Hospital yacht "Albion" :

I joined at Southampton. This is a private yacht and is fitted up beautifully. We can take about sixty patients. There are a Matron, six Sisters, a Colonel in charge, two Medical Officers and two Orderlies.