

## TRANSPORT DUTY.

On Christmas Eve I went on duty at 8 p.m. at 17th General, Alexandria, and having ten patients to look after who were the most ill in hospital, I had planned my work accordingly. At 10 p.m. the sisters and medical officers came round carolling to the patients. Night superintendent came along at 10.30 p.m. and told me I was wanted, and orders were handed to me that Sisters Greensill, Sutherland, and myself were to leave for Suez on 27/12/17. It was a big surprise as we had been looking forward to going to England in the spring, and naturally felt very disappointed, yet there was nothing to do but accept the inevitable. We could not get any money as Christmas and Boxing Days were holidays. Packing was rushed through, and good-byes said. I had made many friends after being amongst English people over two and a half years. We left Victoria Hotel 7.30 a.m., and motored to Sidi Gaba, where we took trains for Suez, arriving there 5 p.m. An ambulance took us to H.M.T.S. 98, "Tofua." It did seem a small ship after being on an Imperial ship for eleven months, going between Suez and Bombay, Persian Gulf and German East Africa. Patients and officers and men on leave came on board the next day. Some of the men were very ill, and could not be left during the night.

Fractured femurs on extension, and one with a Stimins pin through the knee, necessitated very careful handling, but they had to be put in the top bunks for convenience, and worst of all was the hospital being in the extreme bow of the ship. The sea was rough from Colombo, so you can imagine the awkwardness of dressing wounds and the effects on sisters and patients. Personally, I had not that experience, having charge of the dressing room, helped by two orderlies, where we put through between sixty and seventy dressings every morning. Septic cases were done twice a day. The majority of the patients were Australian officers and men, and it was a pleasure to look after them. Our own officers and men were only ninety, but the very best, and many of them who came on as stretcher cases were able to go off the ship on crutches.

The trip out was uneventful and enjoyable. I said uneventful, but one of our

returned officers, Mr. Braithwaite, became engaged to an Australian sister who was on sick leave. It caused quite a bit of excitement, but we wish them every happiness. We called at Albany, where all were entertained to tea in the Town Hall.

Melbourne was our next call, and all Australians disembarked. A band heralded our approach, and the Red Cross sent motor cars after lunch to take all New Zealanders out. They took us all round Melbourne, then on to a reception at Government House. Lady Ferguson gave us a warm welcome, and we had tea. There were many returned Australians sick there also; 5 p.m. we were entertained to high tea in the city, after which we went to see the pantomime "Aladdin," most enjoyable and pretty, and arrived back at the "Tofua" at midnight. We sailed next day, and it was not long before we saw shores, calm as we thought we were, a feeling of excitement thrilled us at being so near home. We arrived in Wellington on February 6th; were in the harbour for two hours before getting to the wharf. All had friends to meet them, and patients were soon disembarked, and in all parts of Wellington, and returned early next morning to have dressings done. We stayed on the ship on account of cot cases. Three weeks' leave has been granted, which will go too quickly. We reported to Miss Maclean, who was kindness itself, and received us as though we really belonged to her. I hope this will be interesting to readers of the journal, but life on the ocean waves has its ups and downs. Still, it is all a part of the great work and war, and we, as sisters, are proud of the men and privilege to be able to do so much for them.

Yours faithfully,

MABEL KITTELTY, N.Z.A.N.S.

Letters from Walton-on-Thames mention the difficulty of preparing for Christmas.

"I little thought I would be again preparing for the feeding of 6100 men. Everything is so expensive and so difficult to get; one hesitates before one purchases anything unnecessary in these days. Clothes, and in fact, everything is frantically dear in England just now. To-day eggs are quoted in the paper at 7d each; we have paid 5d this week, and even with the money in our hands they have been unobtainable,