

## A Scottish Women's Hospital Unit in Serbia

### Some Notes by Dr. Agnes Bennett

The cases were straight from the battlefield of Kaymakchalan "Straight" in this country meant that they had field dressings applied, were carried by hand, or on stretchers suspended one on either side of a mule, to a dressing station about five hours' journey down the mountain. Here they were placed in a "salle de pausements," the wound iodined, a suitable splint applied, and they were left lying in rows on straw in a "Ladnyak" (shelter of boughs) till such time as our ambulances could go for them. Many, alas, were beyond human aid, and a sad enclosure of mounds and little wooden crosses is now all that marks the site of the aforesaid dressing station. Of comforts there were very few—a few blankets only, and it was very cold at night. No attempt was made to take off clothes—these were cut at the site of the wound and the splints as a rule applied over the clothes. The splints, as a rule, were excellent, and excellently applied, but after first application were never taken off, and sometimes cases arrived at the hospital not having been dressed for five or eight days. These probably had lain out higher up waiting for transport to dressing station.

The ambulances usually went up and down in convoys, and some nine or ten or fourteen patients often arrived at the same time, hence they had to wait their turn in the "Admission Tent," lying on their stretchers. On such occasions hot milk or soup was given to each on arrival, and photo thirty shows Miss Waugh, cook, administering this. The white stretchers on the ground are the reception tent stretchers, with white macintosh over them. This was a special institution of our own, and many medical visitors have complimented me on the system. The patient, always in his dirty, blood-stained, war-stained clothes, was put on these, lifted on to a table about the size and height of an operating table and on this all his clothes were removed, and he was washed from head to foot, shaved and specially cleansed if verminous (but this was a comparative rarity), put into clean pyjamas, and then transferred to the ward. This was much better than washing in bed,

and also much more thorough, and as there were always two or three being washed at the same time, plenty of extra labour was available for momentary holding of injured limbs, or careful rolling over to adjust garments. We had always meant to give baths to our patients in this tent, but they were far too seriously injured to ever think of baths. Sometimes a dying man had to be carried straight to a ward. Some, alas—nine—were dead on arrival.

This was hardly to be wondered at when one saw the passage down of the ambulances. This took some two hours, and was down the steepest of mountain roads, which zigzagged down the side of the mountain with sharp hair-pin bends. Often convoys of food and ammunition blocked the way, but it was wonderful the amount of consideration that was given to the ambulances. Going up would have been impossible if loaded, and even when empty the ambulances (fortunately light Ford ones for two cases only) had often to be pushed up. The soldiers used to know the difficult corners for us, and sometimes would wait to give a push at the right moment, and the sister attendants also got into the knack of jumping out at the right moment and giving a push. Always twice, sometimes oftener, the drivers had to wait to cool the engine. Only one mishap occurred on this dangerous road. In trying to pass an ammunition convoy, just when there was only a few inches to spare, the inside wheel knocked against a large stone, threw out the steering, and the car turned over the edge. Most fortunately there were no wounded in the car, and both occupants escaped with a severe shaking and a few bruises. The car was put on the road again at once by a contingent of soldiers, and went on for its load who were eventually safely landed at the hospital.

The cases were of the worst possible variety, mostly "double," *i. e.*, with two compound fractures—two wounds in different parts. One was reported to have thirty-nine shot holes in him. With a single compound fracture these cases would, many of them, have been considered worthy of