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Matron-in-Chief,
A.A.N.S.

I embarked on the 20th October, 1914, on the transport "Shropshire", with 700 Artillery men, and 450 horses, the latter being carried on five decks. We proceeded to King George's Sound, the rendezvous appointed for the troops to meet, escorted by the cruisers. We arrived there, and were detained for a week, waiting the arrival of ten transports, carrying New Zealand troops. At 8 o'clock on Sunday morning, the signal was given to lift anchor, and the forty-two vessels steamed out of King George's Sound, and took up their positions in three divisions, two cables between each boat, and about half a mile between each division. They were conveyed by the "Minotaur", "Ibouki", "Sydney" and the ill-fated "Hampshire" brought up the rear. The "Melbourne" was also attached to the convoy, but we did not see her until the day she left us, when she steamed down the lines, with her signals flying a message from Captain Silver, "Good-bye, and good luck at the end of your Voyage!"

The convoy extended for five miles and all the boats could be clearly seen. At sunset the cruisers drew in near the convoy, and at sunrise took up their positions on the horizon. As no boats could be left behind, the convoy had to proceed at ten knots an hour, that being the maximum speed of the slowest boat, the "Southern", which was carrying horses. The ships were in total darkness at night, with the exception of a light on the aft mast, and a light hanging from the stern to show the following transport the position of the boat ahead of her.

On the voyage the nursing staff of three were kept busy, assisting the medical officers with vaccinations, and inoculating the troops against typhoid. The Hospital, which had previously been the smoking-room, accommodated fourteen patients, and these beds were always full. Several major operations took place on the voyage, and the sterilising had to be done with a methylated spirit lamp. There was a permanent Hospital on the upper stern deck of the transport, which was used for infectious cases, and twenty cases of measles were accommodated there from time to time.

The greatest care possible was taken with the horses, and where practicable, they were exercised daily, coir matting being spread on the decks to prevent them from slipping. The horses stalls were on the deck, and they had a narrow railing across the front, to which the food-bag was attached at meal-times. The leather halters were attached to either side of the stall by steel chains, and the horses slept with their hind-quarters resting against the back of the stall, and the head suspended in the halter. During the night, the horses were frequently heard to fall down, when a picket would immediately rush to the rescue, and the animal would be replaced on its feet. These horses were on their feet in the stalls, with the exception of exercising times, for seven and a half weeks. Twelve succumbed to ships pneumonia, but the remainder were landed at Alexandria in perfect condition, due to the care of Captain McDonald, the veterinary surgeon on board.

On the 9th of November, much excitement was caused by seeing the "Sydney" clear her decks for action, stoke up, and disappear over the horizon. She was followed about half an hour later by the "Ibouki", but the latter returned within half an hour to her former position. As was anticipated, the "Sydney" had received instructions to proceed after the German cruiser, the "Emden", who had gone in the direction of Cocos Island, to take in coal, and destroy the cables. When the "Sydney" got into action with the "Emden", wireless messages were transmitted from the wireless station of Cocos Island, and as the attack progressed, much excitement occurred on the forty-two transports of the convoy. There was great rejoicing when the message came through, "The "Emden" has been beached to save herself from sinking, and the "Sydney" is now chasing the collier". Late that afternoon, the armoured cruisers, "Empress of Russia" and "Empress of Asia" made their appearance, the one to guard the prize, and the other to convey the wounded and German prisoners to Colombo.

That night, a message was received up the lines that the "Sydney" and armoured cruiser would be passing the convoy at 4 a.m., but no demonstration was to be made, as they were carrying wounded and dying men.

Three days later the convoy arrived outside Colombo Harbour late in the afternoon. When they were anchored, a five funnel Russian Cruiser called the "Bayak" guarded the convoy for the night. The following day the "Shropshire" proceeded into Colombo Harbour, where we saw the damaged "Sydney". Permission was given for the medical officer, padre, and three members of the nursing staff to spend two hours on shore, and I need not say that the most was made of this opportunity, this being our first visit to the "Gateway of the East." A motor-car was secured, and we travelled along the sea front, passed the Galle Face Hotel, through the Cinnamon Gardens and native quarters. No time was spent on lunch, and we then visited the bazaars, being on board the transport again, at the end of the allotted span of two hours.

On the following morning, the convoy proceeded on her voyage, as we thought to France. There was a few hours delay off Aden, to take in water, and thence to Suez, where we were again held up, waiting to take our turn in passing through the canal. Each transport was fitted with a large searchlight on her bow, and the journey through the canal took eighteen hours. On the Sinai side of the canal were camps of Indian troops, under the charge of British Officers, at frequent intervals, guarding the canal.

On arrival at Port Said, we were anchored for the night, and owing to this, large numbers of the troops on board had an attack of ptomaine poisoning, due, it was thought, to the fruit and drinks they had purchased from the natives in the boats.

On proceeding to the Mediterranean, the thirty-two Australian transports dropped anchor to allow the ten New Zealand transports to dis-embark first at Alexandria, they having been at sea about ten days longer than the Australians, and the Alexandria Harbour would not permit of more than ten transports dis-embarking at one time.

Upon our dis-embarkation on the 3rd of December, we were notified by the dis-embarkation Officer that we were to proceed to Cairo by the 12 o'clock mid-day train that day, to go to the Egyptian Army Hospital which had been lent to the New Zealand forces. We also were loaned to nurse the New Zealand troops until their own nurses arrived, none having accompanied them on the journey. The train journey from Alexandria to Cairo was full of interest, this being our first

visit to the near East, and as we neared Cairo, we saw the Pyramids in the distance.

Upon our arrival in Cairo, we were met by an Officer of the Egyptian Army, and taken to a Hotel in Heliopolis, where arrangements had been made for billeting us. The following morning at 9 a.m., we reported to the O.C. of the Egyptian Army Hospital for duty. With the exception of the Matron, the Nursing staff then consisted of several French and Syrian ladies who had been trained in the French Red Cross in Paris, several of whom could not speak English. The Australians received a warm welcome. Three days later, four Queensland Military Nurses reported for duty with this Unit, and the work was much lighter after their arrival.

I was placed in charge of the Aseptic surgical ward, and subsequently was appointed theatre sister. This Hospital had been built for the Egyptian Army, and the Staff consisted of several Officers of the R.A.M.C., and Egyptian Army. The orderlies - most highly trained - were Egyptians. Their dress consisted of the regulation turban, a brown jersey with a red crescent worked on the sleeve, khaki knee breeches, navy blue puttees, and bare feet.

The Sergeant in charge of the operating theatre was very distressed at the number of operations being performed on the troops, and in broken English told me that there were too many operations, and that they worried him so that he could not sleep. He later became ill through worry, and it was then I was appointed theatre sister.

The whole of the native orderlies were removed, with the exception of one who was left to assist generally in any way the matron required. New Zealand orderlies took up duties in the wards, and two recently arrived members of the London Mounted Ambulance were selected as orderlies for the operating theatre. One of them, being a medical student, was of the greatest assistance, and the other was such a ready learner that he soon became of equal value.

I remained in this Hospital for a period of seven months, until the arrival of the members of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service, and I then reported to my own Unit, No. 1 A.G.H., which had been quartered in the Palace Hotel at Heliopolis.

I held the position of sister at No. 1 A.G.H., for three and a half weeks, and then I was selected as acting matron of No. 1 A.A.H. Heliopolis. This Hospital consisted of 1,500 beds, and was erected on the Heliopolis sports ground. The Administrative block was the building which had been put up as Office, bath-rooms, and refreshment room for the Sporting Club. On either side were tennis courts, but these had been roofed in with grass matting, and each contained 350 Arab basket bedsteads. They were divided into six sections, and a sister placed in charge of each section, with a nursing and general orderly under her. Fourteen wooden huts, each containing 50 beds, were put up, and the sand of the desert formed a floor; at the front part, partitioned off at either side were the sisters quarters, and kitchens.

Nursing and general duty orderlies were attached for duty to each hut, and the general cleaning of the Hospital was done by a staff of Arabs.

In front of the Administrative block, seventeen marquees were erected to house more convalescent patients, and they averaged fourteen beds each.

HMC.

In the Administrative block, the large room used for washing was converted into a dressing-room. Five tables were provided, fully equipped for doing surgical dressings, and the sister in charge of each hut or division came up to the dressing room with her medical officer, and nursing orderly, at a stated time. Seats were provided for the patients outside, and their dressings were done in turn. In this was, 1,000 dressings per day were done in this room, with the greatest ease. Some of the patients had to report three and four times a day to have their dressings changed.

To this Hospital, large numbers of wounded men from Gallipoli were admitted, and the following arrangements were made by the O.C. As is known the patients did not arrive in too clean a condition from Gallipoli, so a large bath room was erected, plunge and shower, and one end was a room where the patient stripped and left all his clothing and kit. He then proceeded to the bath room, where he was provided with cleansing apparatus, and from there, he went to a third room, where pyjamas, shoes, and a bag, kindly provided by the Red Cross, were given to him. The bag contained all requirements in the way of brush and comb, tooth brush, tooth paste, etc. He was then shown to his bed, in whichever ward he had been allotted. His clothing was taken charge of by the Quartermaster, and perishable articles, such as boots, being placed on one side. The rest of the clothing was sent to a steam disinfectant, and subsequently washed.

The kitchens had to be frequently enlarged as the Hospital grew. The food was provided by arrangement with a French caterer, and great was his astonishment at the size of the Australian appetites. Two huts were erected as dining rooms, each seating 250 men at once. It was no uncommon thing for one of the patients, fit to take his meals in the dining room, to present himself twice during meal-times, but later on, guards were placed at either end of the hut, and the patients were provided with tickets. The patients who were unfit to leave the ward, or their beds, had their meals taken to them in the usual way.

Concerts were frequently held by the Red Cross and ladies of Cairo, and everything was done to keep the patients cheerful and happy. The Australian Red Cross had a store in this Hospital, and the patients were daily provided with comforts supplied by them.

Large numbers of the cases in the Hospital were acute surgical, and acute medical, dysentery being very prevalent, and special wards were set aside for them.

During my stay of seventeen months in Egypt, it rained twice, but then to such an extent that everything in the grass-roofed tennis courts was saturated. The beds were covered with ground sheets, but the rain penetrated these.

The climate of Egypt is very trying in the summer, and on more than one occasion, when travelling in the ambulances, the thermometer registered 117, owing to the hot winds.

Khamseen, the strong winds which blow for fifty days, and fill the atmosphere with sand and germs of the desert, are very trying. Owing to the drifting sand it is impossible to see the sun in the sky, but a bright patch indicates its position.

HMC.

The flies were one of the drawbacks to Egypt, and when taking ones meals, one had a flyswitch beside them, to keep the flies from getting the food before they did.

On one occasion, two very acute cases, who had been wounded in the landing at Gallipoli, were transferred from No. 1 A.G.H., to No. 3 A.A.H., and with mosquito netting, a section of the ward on the tennis court was closed in, large enough to hold the two beds, lockers, chairs, and tables. Unless this arrangement had been made, it would have been impossible to do the dressings of these patients in the open air, owing to the flies.

