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[947]

Harp Ship S. M. Bean

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Some working with British
"do well treated, and the
routine was perfect. The
Indian Med. Service
everything that could be
desired.

The Official War Historian of the Commonwealth Government (Dr. C. E. W. Bean), after his study of the collection of private war records preserved in the Australian War Memorial Library, wrote:—

"The private diaries in this collection furnish some of its most valuable historical records, but, like all private memoirs which were not compiled with any historical purpose, they should not be regarded as first-hand evidence except where it is certain that they are so. The diarist is almost always sincere in his desire to record accurately, but he is subject to no obligation or inducement to indicate whether he is recording his own observations or incidents told him by friends or heard at third or fourth hand at the mess-table. Thus, in some of the diaries in this collection, scenes described with vivid detail, and without any warning that they are told at second or third hand, have been found to be completely inaccurate in important details. A certain number also have been written up or revised long after the events, though doubtless usually from notes made at the time. In most cases the student must rely on his experience and on internal evidence to guide him in judging what is and what is not likely to be historically accurate."

See Hospital Ships
7 & 8.

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To Capt. A. L. McLean

As. Col. Med. History

Am. War Records Sec.

Sir

I am not clear at putting on paper my experiences, which have been very varied, during my four years aboard & I have met most of the important men of affairs. If there is anything in the following pages I shall be glad to have contributed my mite to labor.

We left Am. in the Kgarra 1914, & it was with light hearts we landed in Egypt nearly a month later, all sorts of rumors met us, that hot was to return as to many vessels had been sent, but eventually we arrived at Helwan's Palace Cross & here it was a wild scramble to get settled in our rooms, but we got nothing to eat until after 8 pm, as the 1st comers had also been hungry, & we thought freely with in a couple of weeks we had a few patients long before we were ready for them, my ward under Col Summers ^{deceased} was filled with pneumonias, & terrible it was the only cases I can compare with these

are the Spanish pneumonia influenza, I have seen such a lot of since, indeed many times lately I have wondered if it was the same disease. Sister Cameron of the Melbourne hospital was my medical assistant in that work.

We were always being inspected, by some authority or other, ^{by} Gen. Ford, ^{by} Gen. Baptie (met him again later in Memphis.) etc to see if we knew how to run a military hospital, little they knew themselves then that all or most of these regulations would have to be upset by the by rush, & that anyhow Australian sisters of that year were ^{to be} more anxious about the patient in the bed than the bed & bedding. I was greatly honoured when one day Gen Bidwood came round & stopped to speak for a few minutes. 3 years later I met him at Athenille & found he had not forgotten me. Gen. Baptie's inspection was the worst though, beds, blankets, Cystboards, etc he then & always appeared to have his heart in his work. Another day we had the Sultan & his suite, of

Course cameras had been for-
 bidden, but needless to remark,
 there was one at every corner,
 but we had very poor results.
 Early in March Sister ^{Samson} Dawson & my-
 self were sent to open & take charge
 of the Red Cross department. I must
 admit, interesting work it was, & the ex-
 perience was most useful to
 me in after years, altho at the
 time I was indignant at being
 put to work that lay people could
 & did do in after years. We
 received & unpacked & sorted all
 goods coming from Australia
 then repacked & took them
 There was a lot of humor
 & pathos in all the packages. My
 next helper I met again in France
 with the rank of sergeant, altho
 he was an imported Australian he
 was a most enthusiastic dy-
 per. He had

had 10 men to assist us & found
 not one too many, & Major Barrett
 at the head of affairs, including
 did the books & general office
 work & I had charge of the
 packing store, Many thousands
 of bombs worth of goods went
 thro' our hands, & the tears came
 to my eyes many times on reading
 the loving home messages
 tacked on to heavy things, when
 we thought of the brave boys
 they were meant for & who would
 never probably see them, there
 was much humour too, a very large
 flannel needle foot containing one
 surgeon's needle, & the label said
 in the hope that it would be of
 use in saving life on the battle
 field, I could picture the way
 back station it had come from
 also the concept of cotton wool,
 "it may be of use in stopping haemorrhage
 on the battlefield, and the
 night-shirt "all tapes" tacked.
 "A helpless night-shirt" indeed it

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was "helpless" he prayed till we
cried, but we guessed the loving
sympathic hands that had made
it. About a week before the 25th
April we got our first large order
1750 shirts & socks for a Regiment
then on its way to Gallipoli -
after about the first week of fighting
hardly a day passed but we
got an order for hundreds of
articles & when I tell you we
supplied every hospital ship or ^{hosp.}
on land that asked us from
the whole of Egypt right to
Gallipoli you may know we
worked some. After the wounded
first came in, we found we had
not sufficient nurses for the work,
so I asked permission to go back
to the wards, but was refused,
so after coming off duty in the
P. x rooms, I used to go to the
wards & work with the others
both early & late, it was tiring,
but such a happiness to be able
to do it, & those Boys I shall

never forget them, never a Com-
 plaint but "when shall I be able
 to go back again sister" Altho I
 have been everywhere except
 Salonika, I have never met any
 one like the first wounded men,
 all nationalities, & all filled with the
 same brave devotion to duty. Early
 in May I felt it was a terrible waste
 to have two trained nurses doing
 Red & work that civilians could &
 should do, & approached Major
 Barnett to that end, but he would
 not hear of it - so I took my own
 way out, & went straight in the
 face of odds, & eventually accom-
 plished my aim. The Red & work
 was interesting but I did not
 enlist to do that. Further back
 of July 1915 the C.O. asked me if
 I would care to go on a hospital
 ship. As this was a very great favor
 at the time I fully appreciated
 it - at the time I said yes thank you.
 So on the morning of the 7th via I was
 set forth, sister Woinarski, My King,
 Turk, myself, Larsson, & Gours & at-

At Cairo Station were met by ^{Miss} ~~Mr.~~
 Collins R.A. I.M.H.S. a tiny edition
 of a nurse, but very bright & tactful
 & as she held the rank of ^{2nd Lt} & ^{was}
 of us were sisters, it might have been
 uncomfortable, of course she was
 made Matron & a very good manager
 she was, & a hard worker. We were
 put on the "Grantully Castle" it
 was just being converted into an
 H.S. we had to wait in Alexandria
 a few days & then were hurried
 away, not nearly ready - the beds
 up but no bolts attached to the
 tables attached to the bulkheads, &
 it was a terrible scramble, the
 words given to me contained 175
 beds, & ten orderlies, good boys
 but had never been inside a
 hospital but they worked, I have
 never had better or more eager help
 R.A.M.C. we were short of linen
 & could only have one sheet per
 bed, I did not hesitate & had every
 one torn in half, & thus had two
 sheets per man. I shall keep a list

on what the matron said when I proudly
 showed her what I had done, and for
 she flew round to warn the others,
 I found that like good Australians
 they had also used their brains.
 Poor little matron she had a holy
 fear of the L.M. but after a few
 trips with us, she also would
 lead spells or anything else that
 was handy if necessary. We had
 hard work on board.

We had six medical men on board
 one being the O.C., Ophthalmologist & six others
 & about 30 orderlies, & a L.M. etc.
 On this our 1st trip we did not have
 any regulars as the 4 days
 going up every spare minute was
 taken up in preparing the wards
 & making dressings, filling pillows
 ships & getting them sterilized, etc
 & then when we arrived, we were
 anchored off Cape Bell, & almost
 immediately began taking on patients
 we stayed there about 10 days
 acting as a C.C.S., we keeping
 the serious cases & the others

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being fed their wounds. Dressed &
then next day going down the side
& transhipped to land at Lemnos or
elsewhere - We were continually under
shell fire from the Turkish side, as
several boats at night-time used to
shelter near us, & bullets fell on our
deck repeatedly - I can never
speak too highly of Dr Crispin,
He was M.D. of the South coast for
the last 15 years, & had been
ill & spent his convalescence by
a trip to Galipoli & was appointed
to my ward he took the downstairs
one & worked like a nigger, I had
no time to help him, I married his
table in the morning & then left
him, upstairs I had two Med.
M.C. Offices, for the whole time
we were on that trip I do not
think any sister had more
than 4 consecutive hours of duty
as the cases were all so acute.
At the end of the 10 days we came
back to Port Said, calling in at
Lemnos on the way & when we
+ taking on two more sisters

had finally disembarked our patients we all collapsed for the rest of the day. We had many eminent men amongst our sick officers. One a Major Friery who boasted that he intended to be a Brigadier Gen. before long & felt the D.S.O. R.C. etc. he has done all that & more. I had the sad duty of receiving & attending to, in his last hours of his brother, a Plé Friery in the N. Zealanders. A very high man & died from a head wound. Married with a Card & Army he was Gen Friery's brother. I had other particulars plausible. One thing noticeable about all the patients of 1915, was the great cheerfulness & egotism of them all, later on in 1914 & 18. They all appeared so worn out & tired, this I suppose was only natural.

After staying at Port Said a week we came back to Alexandria & were then changed on to a N.S. The "Gulford Castle" & fortunately took with us 20 orderlies, this ship was one

of the first-four ships completed &
 was most perfectly fitted out, in
 every respect. The Officer had been
 on her from the start & had the greatest
 interest in her - The O.C. Major Baird
 J. M. S. a charming man, (as indeed
 most of the J. M. S. are) Major Abbott
 who had become Surgical Specialist
 a man who was capable of getting
 through more work than anyone
 I knew, a disciplinarian, & organizer.
 & later on Major Murphy, a real white
 man, & a Capt. Anderson all J. M. S.
 & a Capt. Haka a pure bred native of India,
 we also had several ass. Surgeons.
 (natives) & many native orderlies -
 My M. O. was Major Baird, two of
 our sisters were sent on to assist the
 ships taking patients to England,
 otherwise the staff was unchanged.
 Then we commenced doing the regular
 work back & forwards to Gallipoli
 & after a while we were able to
 work more regularly - we had a
 permanent night-sister on duty,
 & as she only had night-duty one

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way, we found it worked well, an orderly in each ward & a sister in charge of the whole hospital, with one retained as. surgeon. The sister could come off when she felt she had done enough. Then the rest of us kept our own wards. The Melton Min Collins & the O.C. agreed that this arrangement tended to the best care of the patients. We went on a trip to Iceland & were there for 10 days while the boat was being repaired, after that we again took up the Gallipoli work until the evacuation, we went on duty at 4.30 & came off at 8 p.m. The night duty doing from 8. to 8. I forget the name of her, a little Canadian, one of the best workers I have met, & admirably the patients. On New Year's Day ~~the~~ 1915 we were going through the Canal on a trip to Bombay, & to return immediately to take up the duty to Iceland. Great was our excitement as up to this no sister had been allowed to go to India with hospital ships

On arrival at Bombay, we disembarked patients (returning natives) & had 5 glorious days cruising in a lot of sightseeing, then suddenly got orders to go to Mesopotamia, we could only do one trip & could not go past the mouth of the "Shatt el Arab river" but from there we loaded up from the Hoop ships "Madras" etc & returned, this we did for several trips, it took 10 days there & back, & it was most interesting going past the various ports & seeing the magnificent sunsets of the Persian Gulf, & when we reached the light ships every body would start fishing, particularly the Padre & a good lot of other men (who by the way was lost by his ~~ship~~ for some months) who was a champion fisherman, in the early part of March we were taken off our beautiful Hoop. Ship of the Veld fitted up for us, not nearly such a comfit or nice boat, but especially built for the Gulf trade, & then we went right up to Basra, a beautiful river & lots of traffic

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on it, he passed the 3 sunken ships
which were intended by the turks or
Germans, to prevent us taking the
oil wells, but fortunately for us, they
swung round with the tide which is
very strong here, & made a better
channel for our ships. The heat
was terrible & I can never praise
enough the soldiers & also the sailors
(2.A.M.H.S.I.) who were first here,
how they worked through those awful
months before the War Office took
charge in the latter part of 1916 I
do not know, not any comfort, it
unknown also electrical appliances,
he had the honor of being the first
sailor from the Mediterranean to
be there, the next lot coming in a
batch of 200 to Bombay & then
being sent up in batches, & very un-
comfortable they were, no arrangements
being made for them, & most of them
not having the resourcefulness or in-
stinct of the Australian sailors.
The work during the hot weather in
a place where it was always hot

was terrific. One trip, we loaded up
 at Beard, with orders to go to the bay
 & fill another boat (The Oxfordshire) with
 our patient, were all very ill, wounded
 & dysenteric, & we were overloaded,
 Coming down the river, they commenced
 to get heat strokes, even down in
 the bottom wards, starting either with
 pain in head or abd. & temp. probably
 rising, or in some cases going up
 suddenly. The treatment, esp. for
 the pain & ice packing, or baths,
 but so many collapsed almost
 at once that it was hard to treat
 them all, however. It took 8 to 10 hrs
 to come down the river, & we were
 hoping the ship would be waiting
 for us, it was just coming over
 the horizon so we met, & at once
 commenced to unload. The incoming
 ship was stopped with P. A. M. C.,
 & was their first trip, so they knew
 very little of the terrible heat
 strokes, but our M. C. went on board
 to help them, it was arduous, our
 own orderlies had to carry every

stretch, & the other orderlies to do
 likewise on their ships, It took
 4 hrs in that awful heat, ~~to remast~~
~~to remast~~ two of the orderlies drop-
 ped dead, & several of our men
 had to go off for 1/2 an hour & rest re-
 peatedly, 6 of the patients died after
 being transhipped & within the
 next 24 hours 122 (I think) died
 from heat stroke - No one except
 those who went thro it can form
 any idea of what it was like -
 Our O.C. wanted to let us take our
 patients straight on but orders
 were orders, & we had to return
 back at once to Basra for another
 load. We used to go up & stay a
 month doing carrier work up &
 down the river, then back to
~~Bombay~~ to India to get re-qualified
 At the end of August the nation
 was changed for shore work, &
 I was acting Matron, for a few
 trips, but I felt I had done enough
 hospital ship work & applied to
 rejoin No. 1 A. G. H. in France

so I refused the permanent position
 of Major & at the ~~beginning~~ ^{beginning} of November
 I sailed for Egypt en route to have
 after eighteen months at sea. In passing
 I may say what a lot of food it
 did me to work with the English.
 It was hard work but we were
 so well treated & the routine
 was perfect. The I. M. S. Officers
 everything that could be desired.
 One of the peculiar diseases was
 what was called Bagdad Boils
 quite unlike the ordinary boil
 very poisonous & very debilitating -
 On the hospital ship we had to improvise
 many things, one trip I had two
 shockingly wounded men & the O.C.
 wanted them put in a Port. Permy.
 bath, but I had no cradle so I tied
 a sheet round the ^{underside} edge of the bath, this
 made a perfect swing them filled
 up & placed the patient in, these
 two men had 4 hours a day each
 of this, one lived 10 days the other to
 our joy recovered as I heard eventually.
 To get a constant drip the services of the Chief

Engineers were called in, & by using a petrol
 tube & tubing, the arrangement was perfect.
 altho primitive, but it served its turn, which
 was all that was required. I reached
 Egypt & was temporarily attached to No
 14 A. G. W., just in time to help with
 the wounded then coming back from
 the Roman front, - but in 5 or 6 weeks
 was on my way to France via England,
 he had as a patient on this trip a sister
 from Memphis: who had become homici-
 dal, after a breakdown due to the
 stress time she had been thro.
 Poor girl, it would have been better
 to have died. We arrived in France
 on Feb. 8th & were at once sent off
 in batches to various hospitals, I being
 lucky enough to get to No 13 Stationary
 Hospital being rechristened "The
 83 Dublin" in compliment to the
 Irish M. O's This was a very great
 show hospital. The Red X department
 being managed by Lady Algonon Gordon-
 Lennox, a very charming woman, & fine
 defagiable worker. I was first put in
 a convalescent ward, then into the

Jaw-ward & Theatre under Major
Valdiaz, a very eminent - American
Surgens - Dentist, his work was marvellous
It was wonderful to see the patient
Come in wounded, nearly the whole
jaw blown away, it would be photo-
graphed at once, & then treated, finally
a Soap emulsion put on & changed
hourly or 4 hrs or twice daily, this
to clean, & it was wonderful & many
times I have used it since, nearly
always most successful, but the great
thing was the drying, which was
hourly in every early case, the Major
had a large drum put on wheels
& a tube attached one side & a
pump the other, we had 6 to 5 o'clock
(I always 2 men out of order) & after
the month or so, was nearly clean (in
48 hrs) the various appliances would
be fitted in, & another photograph
taken, this was done every couple of
weeks after the wound began to heal,
Under the Major was a Capt. Whales,
an eminent Worker, a man, very
nervous & irritable, but clean & witty

He apparently had rather a set against
Scotland, it was funny to hear him
question a North County man, as to which
way he walked when at home, if the man
said South is the answer came quickly
That's right my man, always go south
then you'll be quite safe, but he was fond
to the patients, of course this being the
show ward, we had all the notabilities
there, when Mary, we entertained Prince
of Wales was a frequent visitor, always
came there to get his teeth done, indeed
one day he came & a new dentist
was on, who said to the Prince, my
good man, I can much to bring
blow in another day & you'll get
your teeth done, so the dentist's
half an hour later he discovered what
he had done, & was so upset he did
no more work that day, saying
it's worth a days pay, but I can
only take 1/2. Lord George, & all the other
by way, came along & always to the jaw
ward, & were shown the book of Photo-
graphs etc. From there I went to
No 20 General, where the good was

so scarce, owing to many causes, &
the sisters very unhappy, mainly because
the Matron (whose name amongst the
diggers & Tommies etc) was Inen Vic) suf-
fered from swelled head & swart.
but that's another story à la Keffling,
otherwise it was a pleasant place,
with about 2500 patients, men from all
over the world - After leaving here I
was moved about a bit, in the hope,
for lucky way we were all moved,
in France, & eventually landed
back in this state within a week of
four years from when we started.

I trust there may be some bit
in this epistle that may be of use
to you, if not I can only apologise
for having taken up your time
in reading thro' it. It is not fair
to anyone to put on paper all
the interesting bits of life

Michael Brown -
N. Irish A.A.S.
6 M.D.



Australian War Memorial

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