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Index	
Index	
Index	

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Salonica 20 Am. soldiers 49
Egypt 117
1917 at 14th A.C.H. after Gaza,
very busy.
Salonica 50 in General Hosp.
First winter, no heating
of any kind - cold intense.

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."

The Assistant Collector Am. *Willis*
 Medical History

149.
 117

Salomea

I beg to submit the following account of my movements since leaving Australia.

On March 21st 1917 I left Sydney, on the Hosp. ship "Kanowna", one of twenty-four reinforcements for No 14. A. G. Hosp. at Abbassia. Our first stop was at Fremantle where we took on board six more sisters bringing our number up to thirty. Two little happenings broke the monotony of the trip between W. Aust. & Ceylon. The first was a very good view of what was left of the "Garden" off North Keeling Island & the other actual boat drill, when we were lowered properly in boats to the water & left to pull up to the ship, which steamed on a short distance.

As the "Kanowna" was forty-eight hours coaling at Colombo we made the most of our leave ashore, travelling to Kandy by train one afternoon & back by car next day. Also had a look round about Colombo. Had very little opportunity of seeing Bombay, as we did not get into the dock until late in the evening & left as soon as patients had been taken on board next morning. Our first day in the Red Sea was almost unbearably hot, but the weather changed & the next day we experienced the coldest & roughest weather on the whole trip. Every body unpacked rugs & top coats & eiderdown quilts. We disembarked at Port Tewfik, after a very slow but happy trip. These words could not express how much, we reinforcements appreciated Mrs (Miss Strickland) Kindness to us. She was simply great.

We arrived in Cairo at midnight on May 1st & were met by Miss Creal & taken to Abbassia. As the big & unsuccessful battle of Gaza had taken place ten days previous to our arrival in Egypt, the 14th A. G. H. was a busy spot. It was good to feel one was at least able to do "something" for our brave lads.

I was rather surprised at the good results we got from both

dirty wounds & later on from clean operation cases. I had always understood it was almost impossible to get such results in dirty Egypt. My two most interesting cases, were bombed men I specialised when they were first admitted & at their worst. One had cellulitis of right upper arm, three small wounds in the chest, two in the side & a compound fracture of the left leg. At first it was thought the leg & arm would have to be amputated, but they were given a chance, & though in a fearful condition, eventually cleaned up. The second had a large superficial wound in the back & a frightful buttock wound. He had haemorrhaged very much & it seemed impossible for him to live, but although a middle-aged man, he braced up, made up his mind to get better & did it. Gaseous irrigation & compresses were chiefly used for both these cases. In two months they left for Aust. happy & smiling & all healed up, except the leg which was to be plated at home. I think one of my most patient cases was another bombed man who had a compound fracture of the right femur & left tibia. In spite of great discomfort he was almost always cheery & bright. It is scarcely fair however to speak of one more than another for no doubt they were all excellent patients. On duty time at the 1st A.G.H. was from 7.30 a.m. to 7.45 p.m. one day & till 1 p.m. the next. The long day was very tiring, but it was nice to be free every second afternoon either to rest or to go sight-seeing. Towards the end of July the sisters of the Med. Evac. Forces arrived in Egypt on their way to Salonica & twenty-nine of their number were left in Egypt & the same number of our staff going on in their place. At the time I did not feel very pleased, but since, for many reasons have been glad I was sent.

Left Egypt on August 12th & although there were plenty of submarines about had an uneventful run across, only taking 48 hours to do the trip between Alexandria & Salonica. We arrived in the harbour in day light so could see the country, but it did

make us feel very cheerful, dry baked looking hills & very little green, just odd trees in the town. It was dark by the time we disembarked & as the ambulances whirled us through the rough cobbled street & dusty roads we wondered what sort of a place we were in. A number of us were sent to the 4th Canadian (later 52nd G.H.) & the rest to the 5th Canadian (50th G.H.) for the night & were properly sorted out to our ~~proper~~ units next day. The Canadians welcomed us warmly & we all thought them very nice indeed. I suppose they felt even more kindly towards us because we were relieving them. Some had been in Salonica two years & were glad to get away.

The heat was moist & very trying, very different to the dry heat of Egypt. We felt it more, but that was because we had only the huts & missed the large airy rooms we had on the other side. However we survived.

Our quarters at the 50th G.H. were three long huts, one for kitchen, dining room & sitting room & the other two bedrooms - each hut containing twenty rooms each. Two sisters shared one room, but slept on the narrow verandah or in a marquee at the back of the huts, except in very cold weather. We were fortunate in having a decent bathroom & could usually get a hot bath, except when the pipes burst or the tap water in the taps became frozen. At that time the water in the bedroom jug would freeze during the night & one had to depend on a hot water bag for a wash in the morning.

During the first winter we were not supplied with heating apparatus for our rooms, but nearly everyone managed to get a brazier made from a Kerosene tin. No doubt they were unhealthy but one simply had to get warm.

First thing in the morning was the most trying time, our hands became so frozen it was hard to get dressed.

Last winter "Perfection" stoves were supplied & they were splendid, for we could light them in the morning to warm our hands.

Our wards at the 50th General Hosp. were huts each containing 45 beds. This number seemed far too many, but I was told we were well off, as previously all the lockers were turned side ways & fifty beds were in each ward.

The first six weeks were uneventful, most of my patients being ordinary 'benign tertian malaria' & none of them very sick. Just a few had 'malignant tertian'. The treatment for the benign tertian type was usually, Quin. Sulph gr xv i.o.s. for the first week & gr x i.o.s. the next. If in longer the amount was lessened but few stayed in longer than ten days or a fortnight unless a relapse ~~so~~ occurred.

Sometimes the treatment varied according to the severity of the attack — or the medical officer.

I was next put in charge of a ward where almost all were malignant tertian malaria cases. All the worst cases in the hospital were transferred here for special treatment. A course of intramuscular injections of quinine were given & in the majority of cases proved successful. *Intra-muscular Quin. gr xii. xv or xviii* was given morning & evening with gr xv by mouth at midday for four days. After three days two more injections were given then every seven days for three weeks, with gr xv i.o.s. by mouth when no injections were given, this being decreased later to gr x i.o.s. or i.o.o. Cases relapsing after a fair trial of *Intramuscular Quinine*, were given intravenous injections of Gaby, once a week for three or four weeks & very good results were obtained from its use.

Any case of cerebral malaria was given Quinine intravenously, on admission followed by a course of intramuscular injections. The routine treatment of ordinary malarial cases was: — a blood film was first obtained & sent to the Laboratory & the patient given Quin Sulph gr xv with Aspirin gr x if complaining of headache or running a high temperature. If the patient had a

high temperature or inclined to rigor was put between blankets & hot water bags put to his feet, the sponging being left until his skin had acted well. He was then sponged very quickly & carefully, in case of chill. Calomel gr.iii was given, unless the patient had a history of dysentery, followed by saline.

We lost one case, he had pernicious anaemia after repeated attacks of malaria. He was an extremely interesting case from which one learned a lot - but as he died, suppose details of his treatment are of no use.

After five months of extremely interesting work here was sent to the surgical block. My ward was the dysentery - history, surgical cases, but there was little of interest. As the majority were old malaria cases too, there was as much medical as surgical work to be done. It was at this period I used to envy the sisters in France who were "doing something".

As the weather became hot, towards the end of May '19. & June fewer patients were admitted. The hill hospitals at Fortiach were enlarged & the patients sent there instead as it was supposed to be much cooler than down by the bay where we were.

Only a few wards - the eye clinic - were left open.

Workmen had been busily employed for sometime, making openings in the sides of the huts, two at each side, covering them with mosquito netting & emergency doors made to be put up from inside if necessary. Also awnings were put along the sunny sides of every hut. All this made them beautifully cool - & then we left them. The year before the lads were there all the summer & nothing was done & the heat at times was frightful.

When the 30th G.H. partly closed some of the sisters went to the 42nd - Dysentery Hosp - & more of us to the 60th G.H. at Fortiach for a little over two months. It was a decided change & gave one an idea of the advantages and

disadvantages of tent life. Whilst here, on our half-days went for a few picnics, but it was so hot & so far to any decent shady spot they did not happen often. The most enjoyable was a trip to the top of Kotō a few miles away, from which an excellent view of the surrounding country may be had. There was a Convalescent Camp a short distance from the 60th & invitations were often sent for sisters to go their concerts etc. Most of them being very good, so we were not so badly off for entertainment.

On Sept. 1st we were recalled to our own unit & found large convoys of Greeks were being admitted. Almost all were medical cases, dysentery, malaria, pneumonia & a good number of "Spanish influenza". I had the only surgical ward open at the time & nearly all the cases were old septic wounds. I managed somehow to get "flu" at the end of a fortnight & lost my ward. It was particularly irritating because on the 15th Sept. the big "stunt" commenced & soon wounded were pouring into all the hospitals. It was unfortunate the influenza epidemic came at the same time, it meant such crowds of lads died up the line without a hope of getting down as of course the wounded had to come first. Also twenty or thirty sisters were off at a time & more than half the orderlies, making the work so much harder for those who were on. No doubt it was an awful time. When I got back to work at the end of ten days, found all the medical Greek patients were being transferred to a hospital of their own, to make room for Germans. They were not keen on leaving us & really once one got used to them they were not bad patients. How ever it was nice to have our own again. They were very sick lads & one felt that, often with only an incompetent "general duty" man, pressed into service as an orderly, to help one

the men did not get as much attention as they should.

However one could only do the very best possible for them. Our off-duty time used to be three hours a day & half a day a week, but in those days it was a far away dream-if we ever gave it a thought - for ever so long.

The cases were harder to treat on account of so many of them having malaria as well as influenza. Both had to be treated. There were a great many deaths. So many had been out so long & had had a great deal of malaria & in some cases dysentery too. The stunt had tired them out - it was near the end of summer too - so that when they got influenza, could not well fight it. As patients I think the Lomnies (Scotties & Irish included), are absolutely splendid & I am very glad indeed that I had an opportunity of nursing them. Only those who were in Salonica can properly appreciate what they did & suffered out there. Certainly their own people here in England do not properly understand & appreciate them.

Towards the end of October the ~~influenza~~ influenza eased down & dysentery became very bad. Both dysentery hospitals were filled & the 30th had to clear out convalescent influenza cases, to take in dysentery. For about six weeks we were very busy with that & it in turn eased off & we actually got a lot of patients away to Blighty" (after Armistice) we thought we would probably be very slack. However old

influenza returned & as fast as we could get the wards cleaned & fumigated they were filled again. My Christmas-box consisted of thirty eight cases mostly stretcher cases at 9.30 pm Christmas-eve, & as I had received six earlier my ward was full but for one bed. Christmas day was therefore very busy. The majority of them soon recovered & only one died. It was especially trying, when all the fighting was finished to have the men dying by dozens with influenza. Very soon the hospital

began to empty, but this time we were happily getting their tickets fixed for their dear old Blighty, & they were so happy.

No doubt other Salonica sisters have given you a good idea of the beauties of Macedonia - for it is a beautiful place. I cannot describe beauty well - only appreciate it. But three things stand out before every thing else, the gorgeous sunsets over the bay, the wonderful hills - barren as they are they have a beauty all their own, summer & winter - & the spring-time.

Our favourite picnic spot from the 50th - in the early days when an ambulance was obtainable - was at Miska Bay, a ten mile jolly ride. There was a lovely spot there for bathing, in the warm weather. Nearer the hospital it was very dirty. One could not go just anywhere - for the simple reason you could not get there unless by ambulance, hired cars being unknown.

In our time off, if we wished to go shopping in Salonica we allowed ask any ^{British} car for a lift. That did not mean that they would stop. The lorry drivers were our very best friends & next the ambulance drivers. The Ford-car or "Tin-lizzie" people generally whizzed by & very conveniently did not see us, the same applied to a "Staff" car, if an officer of one or two stars happened to be in it. He was far too important but very rarely did a General pass us by, somehow he did not mind picking up a dusty, tired sister & her parcels.

Although I did not ~~mind~~ ^{like} the town on account of its filthy smells, I never tired watching the wonderfully mixed crowd. Beside the Salonicans, there were the soldiers. Beside our own the French, Serbian, Italian, Russian & Greek & French Colonials, with their varied uniforms. Then there were sailors, most of them Greek & the nurses - French, Italian, Russian, Scottish Women, English & Australians & V.H. Ds. & General Service girls.

I left Salonica on Feb. 4th '19, thankfully for many reasons. Arrived in England in that fearful rain & fog, on the 15th. Have enjoyed the spring-time & summer here but will be glad to go back home now.

Would like London if only we had a really good Australian Hostel there, for it takes all the joy out of going there, worrying about getting a room. We could not stay long at the Hostels when we came, they were far too crowded & most of us would rather pay

something where we stay. The Hostel in Edinburgh at Drumshengh Gardens was excellent in that way. It was beautifully comfortable & one paid for bed & meals each day, so did not feel under a compliment to any one. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I fully appreciated the comfort of the Hostel at 40 Bedford Place, when I arrived there wet & weary & nobody on earth could have been more kind than Mrs Kerr-Lawson but as much as she wanted to, could not keep us, for crowds more nurses were coming every day. This may look as if I am finishing up with a grumble, but please understand it is not. I'm afraid it is a fearful "narrative" but hope just a little of it may be of some use. Enclosed are a few photographs, which may be of interest.

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Australian War Memorial

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