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AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
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SISTER SCANLAN.

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."

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[1035]

Egypt
Q.A.M.N.S.

O. Rosseton R.R.C.

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Met by Mrs. Brown

General - Surgeon's work.
looked into only 2 sides -
no time to do for a while.

Bad wounds - gas gangrene -
used irrigation quite early -
was dressing and not bandaging.
20 Australian sides there,
all got on exceedingly well
with British.

General Royle's impression
was Australian nurses
definitely better than British.
Surgeon always had Aust.
sides for abd. cases.

On Hops ship. to Persian Gulf -
to Bombay - Lumsden's men
from Aust. ship's crew down
with heat stroke. Much

sickness among medical
staff - Nurses not so (see 17/19)

Men could not stand the
heat in the wards - nurses
did. Nursed heat stroke
patients, no patient

T113 for 3 days. no ice.

all British patients.

Medical & nursing work
poor, better to have had
more nurses.

Jerusalem July 1918 - on
sides, 3 ordinals to 240 cases.

Operations 15 to 20 a day.

at No 3 A.S.H. France

60-70 cases (operations)

in 4 tables at one time.

at No 1 A.S.H. Rouen.

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AUSTRALIAN WAR RECORDS SECTION
E-253
Sister SCANLAN R.R.C., Aust. Nurse with Q.A.I.M.N.S. in EGYPT.

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She was trained in the Perth Public Hospital was in Western Australia in charge of Surgical Ward, Fremantle Hospital, and Night Superintendent, Perth Hospital, when war broke out. She sent in her name in 1915 to Miss Shacklin - Lady Superintendent of the Commonwealth Nursing Service - afterwards Matron-in-Chief.

The Nurses did not know anything of the A.I.F. or other Services; they did not know that they might be detailed for service with the British Nursing Service. They were notified to report to the Lady Superintendent as soon as possible about a fortnight later. There were about 46 in Australia at that time who were selected for duty with the R.A.M.C. Miss Scanlan was told that she was detailed for Service with the British Service - she was not on the reserve. 5 others at that time and many others since have been to the British Nursing Service. Sister Scanlan was told that she would be a Staff Nurse with £40 per year salary, and that she would be fitted with a uniform in London. She went in her Hospital Uniform and embarked in May 1915 by the "Mooltan" with many Australian Nurses in the 3rd A.G.H. under Colonel Fiaschi.

They called in at Bombay and General Baptie saw them and got as far as Egypt. There was no one in charge of the R.A.M.C. Sisters; Miss Wilson, I suppose was in charge, but she took no special measures and we did not have to go to her at all about anything. There were troops on board and the Sisters were detailed to do duty; their rank was equivalent to the A.I.F. Sisters, only that they wear stripes on the arm; the Staff Nurses wear none; the Sisters wear two stripes; the Matron wears one Cuff.

There was quite a big crowd, 46 Q.A.I.M.N.S. (Reserve) There was a number of extra Sisters for Egypt with the A.I.F. It was thought at that time that there was a special selection of trustworthy Nurses to be detailed from Imperial Q.A. Service. They disembarked at Suez and entrained at 4 a.m., there was no breakfast, and they had nothing to eat till 1 o'clock on the shore. The Cairo girls had their meals though they travelled on the same train. They caught the train at Suez and arrived at Cairo at 8 o'clock; they were met by Miss Oram, Matron-in-Chief, and allotted to different Hospitals. Those for the 15th General Hospital were taken to the Regina Hotel for dinner, and a few were sent to the Hotel-de-France to live. They got to bed at 1 a.m. and were called at 6 a.m., had breakfast at 7 a.m. at the Regina Hotel. The Motor Ambulance was waiting and they went off to the Hospital in a hell of a hurry. Our Australian clothes went out to Abassia in Alexandria, where the Matron was Miss Grierson. They were put into a Surgical Ward with 100 Beds and only two Sisters; the Surgical cases were from Gallipoli; these were acute, severe cases. They had long nights and had no time off duty for a month. There were cases of all sorts; Acute Australian Cases. All the worst cases went there first; all the bad Australian Cases went there first before going on to Cairo. The Convoys were arriving at all hours; Femurs, Head Cases, and all kinds. These cases were almost all in a bad state; the worst I have seen since the Gaza fighting. Captain Heath was one of the Surgeons who had most to do with the Acute Cases. Many of the cases had just the Dressings applied in the field, no other dressings having been done. Most of the wounds were in a very bad condition; much Gas Gangrene. Most of the Femurs were in listless Splints; these were put up in "Hodgens" and some in "Hey Groves". We were using irrigation quite early, with Carbolic and Saline. We soon after used Emsol, and later, the Carrel Dakin.

All the Surgeons used "Wet Dressings" and the wounds were not bandaged. The improvement with Emsol was wonderful. I was working there in June 1915 when the conditions had improved. As soon as the cases were fit, and some very soon, we sent them away on account of pressure. Many Australians were sent off on Hospitals ships at once to Malta or England or somewhere; some Australians went on to Cairo. Miss Grierson was Matron. We had a fair number, (20), of Australian Nurses. We got on well at once with the British Nurses. The only "Regulators" were the Matron and the Assistant Matron. Discipline was fairly strict. There was an

Definitely

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training of the

inspection daily by a Major. General BAPTIE inspected occasionally ~~and his~~ impression was, that the ~~impression of the~~ Australian Nurses was ~~definitely~~ better than the average of the British - and the Matron-in-Charge, Miss. Grierson, will bear this out - especially in Abdominal Cases; they seem to have more confidence and were better workers. The Surgeons always use Australian Nurses for Abdominal Cases. The British Nurses were not of the same training as the Australians, especially in the later period. We did not work with Australian Officers. I was at No. 15 General till February, 1916. I left in a Hospital Ship for the Persian Gulf. The Assistant Matron went as Matron and she selected her own Staff, and asked me to go. The Assistant Matron was Miss. Stewart. We went up as far as the Bar, near Bazra, in the Gulf. We got a lot of Heat Strokes. We brought down Townsend's men from Kut-el-Mara. The Turks had bombed the Hospital and the cases were in a bad way; very ill-fed and ill nourished. The heat in the Gulf was so bad that many of the ship's crew were down with Heat Strokes. The Staff of Medical Men were always getting sick and had to be changed. The Nurses not so. This was very definite and was a very striking fact. Also, the men could not stand the heat down in the Wards; the Nurses had to and did. (Note: Compare this observation with No. 3 A.G.H. at Lemnos, when the same phenomena was marked. A.G.B. A.E.B. This is important.)

We were then from February till September doing trips the whole time - 10 days to a trip - took the cases to Bombay; were 10 days going from Bombay to the Gulf. Loaded Cases and got back in 10 days.

On e other Australian Sister, Sister Ryan, ^{was on board} she lately joined the A.I.F. - but she did not get on with the British at the Citadel.

Sisters Bridgeman and Gibbs, both from Western Australia, were both working on the "DONGOLA". There was a terrible temperature and they had to zig-zag the ship to get air; it was terrible; the "E DONGOLA" ran out of ice, and consequently had heaps of cases of Heat Strokes. This was about July the Monsoon month, temperature 124 deg. to 130 deg. We did not go ashore at all, as the Matron was very strict, and if we went on shore we would have had to come back for meals, and it was not worth while. We were, however, trusted on board, and I have found that the Australian Matrons on A.I.F. Boats are frequently running round. Our Matron was very fond of the Sisters; she worked very hard herself, and had no red tape. We came into meals in the hot weather without capes, etc.

There was an operating Theatre on board but few operations were done. Nearly all the cases after Townsend's fighting were, Sickness, Heat-Strokes, Malaria, etc. I had the Heat-Stroke Cases; gave them continuous irrigations and Iced Water. I had a Case a temperature of 113 deg. for 3 days; hex died. We had on one of the bad trips a great number of deaths - 7, but most of the troops were all O.K. On the same trip the "DONGOLA" has 20 deaths. Not many Dysentery Cases and these were recovering. We had Heat Cases, Relapsing Fever, Etc. The Cases were as a rule poorly nourished. We took all British, no Natives, no Australians.

^{A.E.B.} We had ~~poor~~ tucker ourselves; quarters were poor, 3 in some, 2 in others. Cabins were very small; Bathing arrangements poor. We were all very fit and well and liked the work and were kept busy, but could do it. We had 9 Nurses and 1 Matron - 10 Nurses in all, and 4 Medical Officers. Also 30 Medical Orderlies. The work of the Medical Orderlies was poor; you cannot trust them; it would have paid better to have had more Nurses. Some are very good in the Theatre, and especially the Regulars; they are very good. The boys are not very keen on it and you cannot expect much from them at nursing. Lately they have been P.B. and are simply no good. ^{on the homeward}

^{back} We had much Tennis in the morning when cool going from Bombay. We did not have much time when ~~returning~~ with the patients. On the return trip we did not go near the Wards till the day before arrival ^{at Bazra}.

In September 1916 I went to the Citadel General Hospital;

The Matron was Miss. Dodds, R.R.C., 2nd in Command in Egypt. She has been there ever since except for a tour in Palestine, which took 4 days. I got to Jerusalem in July 1918. The Surgical ward was there for the big fight at Xmas in the Operating Theatre. We took in Surgical, Dysentery and Malaria; we had a good nurse for our Surgery. We had 1 Sister to 240 Cases with 3 Orderlies. The Convoys were arriving up to 11-12 p.m. We went on solidly without a stop. The wounded just poured in. April 19th, 1917 was the worst day, when there was a bit of a muddle. General Murray was sent back through it. It took about 2-3 days to get there. The wounded came across the Desert on Camels and then straight through on trains - that was at first. Later in the fight they went to the C.C.S. and we got them 3-6 days later. We used then to keep them some time and could see the results of the operations. Later they sent them to England on Hospital ships.

At first we had to send a lot of Convalescents to some old buildings; we left the Acute ones in Hospital. We were lent 13 Queensland A.I.F. Nurses temporarily in December 1917 - the time of the Jerusalem Fight - I was theatre Sister then. There was 1 Theatre, 1 Operating Table. We had 15-20 Operations in a day, even more. (Note: This is small compared with the Records of the 3rd. A.G.H. in France, ~~R.G.H.~~ ^{R.G.H.} we have had 60-70 Cases on 4 tables at a time.) We had Sister Bridgeman and Gibbs with us on the Q.A.I.M.N.S. and Sister Bottrell and another.

Australians are good patients but are most untidy. The poor old Tommy will keep things tidy and do it patiently, while the Australians will growl. They are very untidy. In the Imperial Hospitals the tidiness of the Wards is thought as very important; patients have to keep them both clean and tidy.

The Australians did well as cases; I did not see any special evidence of Disease or wounds as regards severity. The Australians can work with the best; if you wanted a thing done you got an Australian to do it.

near to
the Citadel
from front

at the
front



Australian War Memorial

Item control



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